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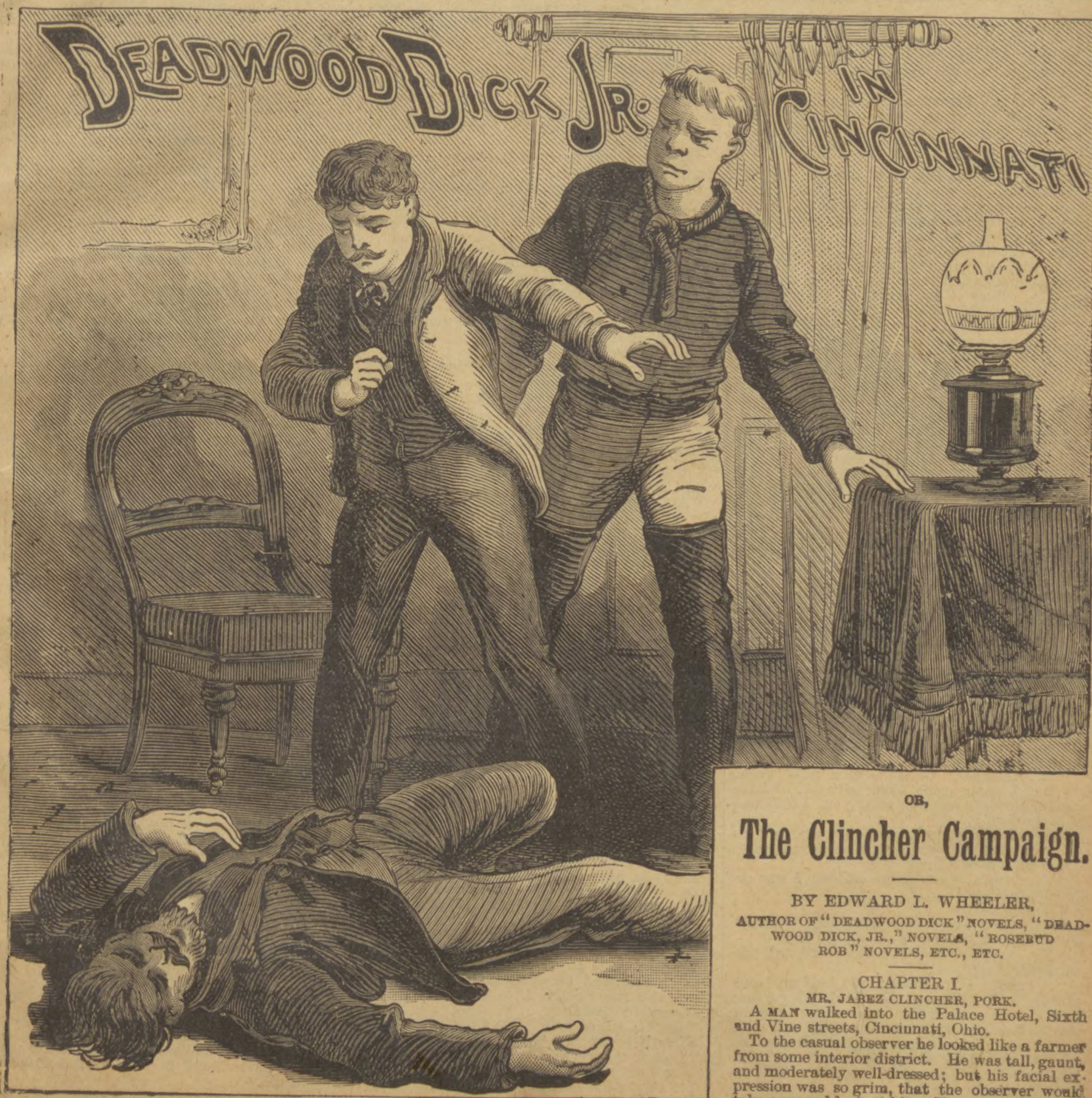
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A TERRIBLE SIGHT AWAITED DICK'S GAZE.

OR, The Clincher Campaign.

BY EDWARD L. WHEELER,
AUTHOR OF "DEADWOOD DICK" NOVELS, "DEAD-
WOOD DICK, JR.," NOVELS, "ROSEBUD
ROB" NOVELS, ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

MR. JAREZ CLINCHER, PORK.

A MAN walked into the Palace Hotel, Sixth
and Vine streets, Cincinnati, Ohio.

To the casual observer he looked like a farmer
from some interior district. He was tall, gaunt,
and moderately well-dressed; but his facial ex-
pression was so grim, that the observer would
take a second look at him. He wore a straggling
beard, and was minus one eye.

Walking to the office counter, he said:

"I am Jabez Clincher, and I want to see a man by the name of Ezra Moore!"

"No such person stopping here!" answered the dapper little clerk.

"Ye'r a liar!" roared Mr. Clincher, smiting the counter with a formidable fist. "The man is stopping here!"

The office was crowded with guests and politicians, and Mr. Clincher's violent retort at once created excitement.

Jim Jones, the "bouncer" of the place, and a retired pugilist, advanced and grasped Mr. Clincher by the shoulders.

"What's the matter here?" he demanded.

"Come! You git!"

But Mr. Clincher was not particularly on the "git!" for, turning upon the burly Jones, he seized him, wiped the floor with him once, twice—and then threw him fully five yards away, as if he were a bundle of straw.

Of course this enhanced the excitement, and for a moment there seemed to be a fair prospect of a genuine row.

This, however, was averted by Mr. Maxwell, one of the proprietors, putting in an appearance.

"Why, Clincher," he expostulated, "what is the matter that you are creating such a disturbance?"

"What's the matter? Matter enough! Think I'll let any young jackass like that clerk o' yours, he to me? Not by a jugful!" and Mr. Clincher cast a withering glance at the dapper clerk.

"No one will doubt that, Mr. Clincher," Maxwell hastened to reply, "but there is no need of your becoming so excited. I can personally assure you that no such party as Ezra Moore is a guest of my house!"

"Then all I kin say, ye'r another liar, by thunder, same's yer clerk! I follered Ezra Moore to yer tavern myself, saw him go to the counter, register his name; then he war shown up to his room. So, now!"

Mr. Maxwell was beginning to get mad.

"If such a person as Ezra Moore is in my house he is here under an assumed name, I assure you. Here is the register. Perhaps you will recognize this Moore's signature!"

"Nary. Wouldn't know Moore's handwritin' no more than a settin' hen knows who laid each egg she's coverin'. Call down all yer guests, an' I'll pick out my man, purty thunderin' quick!"

"Man, you are mad. I shall do nothing of the sort. You had better go. If Mr. Moore turns up I will telephone you!"

"Telephone be darned! I ain't leavin' hyer till I find thet ornery cuss, Ezra Moore. So, thar!" Mr. Clincher declared, doggedly.

"We'll see!" Maxwell said, grimly. "I'll have no more of this sort of business in my house, and you can bet on it!" and turning to a hall boy, he added:

"Call in two policemen, and order a cab. Clincher must be out of his mind, and I'll send him to his home at Mount Auburn!"

Clincher gave a snort of rage.

"Oh, ye will, hey?" he roared. "Waal, now, Maxwell, ye'll need to call in the hull police force ter do it. I ain't no baby, you bet, an' I kin lick my own weight in wildcats!"

At this juncture a young man who had been an interested looker-on stepped forward and touched the hog merchant on the arm. He was wirily built, about twenty-six years of age, and possessed of a pleasant face, dark-brown eyes and hair, and a slight mustache. He was well-dressed, but there was nothing flashy about his appearance.

"Mr. Clincher," he said, in a mild voice, "you had better come along with me. I have some business to transact with you, I believe—important business!"

Clincher glared at him a moment, as if he were tempted to assault him, then demanded:

"Well, who are you?"

"I am from Washington—at least, I was ordered here from there."

Clincher stared.

"Ye don't say," he ejaculated. "I'll be darned if I expected ye so soon. So ye'r—"

"No names, please," the other ordered, peremptorily. "Come!"

"All right; I'll go 'long. But, hold up," and, turning to Mr. Maxwell, he added: "First time I git a spare minnit, I'll come around, buy up this darned tavern, and turn you out. An' when them perlicemen come, jest tell 'em they can trot right back along their beats, an' club helpless old wimmen and children. I've no yearthly use fer 'em!"

And with this parting shot Mr. Clincher accompanied the Washingtonian from the hotel.

A cab was waiting near at hand, to pick up patronage, so they entered this, and the "hog-merchant"—for such he was—gave the order:

"Clincher's, Mount Auburn," and they were driven rapidly away.

"So ye'r the detective, hey?" Clincher demanded, as they were whirled along.

"Yes. I was in Detroit when I received a telegram to come here, so I lost no time in doing so."

"Bully fer you! If thar's anything I like better than hot spiced rum, it's promptness, 'specially in hogs."

The young man eyed his eccentric companion a moment, as if at a loss whether to be insulted by the blunt allusion.

Seeing his error, Mr. Clincher added:

"I deal in pork, you see. Made my pile out o' et—that, an' Chicager wheat. An', now, young feller, what's yer name?"

"Bristol."

"Bristle, hey? Humph! I've made a good bit o' money out of hog bristles, in my time!"

"But I don't happen to be of that species of Bristols," was the retort.

"Sart'in not. No offense, I hope. Et's only my blunt way o' speakin'. Ef ye ever want ter go inter the hog trade, you can come to me an' I kin post ye better'n any other man in Cin'snati. A shoat's a shoat, the kentry over, but et takes a good judge to tell a good shoat frum a bad 'un. I have a thunk you're frum fu'ther West?"

"A great ways further."

Old Clincher mused a moment.

"Pears to me, too," he said, "thet ye use good smart langwidge fer a cowboy, 'lowin' ye aire one, or hev bin ole. S'pose ye hed a kerlegeate edication, though, when ye was a youngster, hey?"

"Have you ever heard of Deadwood Dick the original, and Deadwood Dick, Junior, the detective, his successor?" was abruptly asked.

"Yas," Mr. Clincher admitted. "I'm an old boss at readin', when pork is low. I've read all about them pesky cusses."

"Well, I am Deadwood Dick, Junior!"

"Thunderation! Ye don't mean it?"

"I do. And I can also say that I was never inside a school-house after I was twelve years of age."

Mr. Clincher gave a gasp of astonishment.

"Ye don't mean it?"

"I do, though."

"But whar'd ye'd git yer eddication? I hain't got much, 'cept in figgers, but I'll be darned ef yer langwidge don't knock the time out o' me. An' I went ter school till I was nineteen."

"Contact with the people, experience in the ups, down and hardships of life, and a keen observation of what goes on around you, are prominent factors in self-education!" Dick replied.

"Ah! the cab is slowing up."

"An' yander is where the old porker ginerally takes off his boots," Clincher said, pointing out of the window with pride in his voice. "Thar's one little piece o' evidence that Jabe Clincher knows a few about hogs!"

CHAPTER II.

MR. CLINCHER AS A NARRATOR.

UPON a splendid sloping lawn stood a handsome stone mansion of modern architecture—a home, judging by exterior appearance, fit for a prince.

The lawn was liberally adorned with shrubs, and although it was past the season for flowers, all the surroundings were most attractive to the eye.

Jabez Clincher had a charming home, as Dick more particularly found out, after he had entered it.

It was expensively and luxuriously furnished.

"I hed this house built, an' fixed up to suit my own notion, and my darters!" Mr. Clincher said, as he led Dick into the parlors, sitting-room, dining-room, and library—the latter being well-stocked with fine volumes.

Dick was not a little surprised to find that a man so eccentric, and with such a rough vernacular, should have such exquisite taste, in all his arrangements and surroundings. Perhaps, however, much of it was owing to the taste of the old port-merchant's "darters."

They returned to the sumptuously-furnished front parlor, and became seated, Mr. Clincher touching a silver call-bell.

A servant appeared.

"Send Car'line here!" Mr. Clincher ordered.

Directly a chit of a girl, aged about fifteen, very slim, tall of her age, and possessed of a comely face, entered the parlor.

She was neatly but plainly dressed.

Evidently the Clincher did not throw away much on fineries, except for home comfort.

"Car'line, this is Bristles, the feller what's goin' to look up yer sister; an', mind ye, treat him right, fer ther's no hog bristles about him! He's my guest, an' is ter have ther best the place contains. What are yer favorite beverage, Bristles, fer my cellar holds all sorts, an' Car'line, tho' she's my youngest darter, can knock spots off ther best drink-decoctor in Cin'snati a-fixin' up drinks, ef I do say. An' I opine I don't lie, not even about hogs!"

"Well, I am not much of a drinker," Dick responded, "but if I have anything, I'll take a little port wine, or sherry."

"Correct as a hog on ice. Car'line, fetch up a bottle of the Widder, and bring me a bowl of rum punch, that's a good gal, an' tell that con-sarned cook tew fix up a boom-fine lunch fer two. Be spry, now; silks an' satins are down, an' you'll be hankerin' after some new dresses!"

Caroline blushed, bowed, and glided from the room.

"Thet's my youngest," old Clincher explained, "an' tho' she hain't so handsum' as her sister was, she's got more sense, and love fer her dad."

"She's a likely looking girl!" Dick replied, feeling called upon to say something. "It isn't always the woman with a pretty face who pans out the best."

"Ther's where yer head's as level as a hog's back," Clincher declared. "I've known et to be a fact. My old woman, Betsey, weren't no great shakes fer beauty—she warn't as purty even as thet acteress, Mary Ann Anderson, what comes hyer sometimes, but, criminy, she c'd rastle out the work, and was a powerful help to me. Poor soul, she's gone now! But, I say, Bristles, thet Mary Ann Anderson aire a stunner, ain't she? Last time she war here, I tuk sich a fancy to her, thet I sent her a stuffed shoat fer breakfast!"

Dick felt like laughing, but of course desisted. He wondered, however, if the queenly Mary appreciated the shoat enough to introduce it into "A Winter's Tale."

The drinks were presently served by Car'line, and after Clincher and the detective had partaken, the speculator remarked:

"Waal, now, Bristles, I presume you'd like ter know what I want o' ye?"

"I am here for that purpose," Dick replied.

"Waal, I'll tell ye. You see, I was purty considerable excited down at the hotel."

"Yes."

"Well, I had darned good reason to be—hogged if I hadn't, as you will allow, when you've hearn the story, which ar' this:

"Two years ago, my gal, Clara, graduated from school—fer my gals shall hev a thorough eddication, ef I have ter raise a corner in pork ter give et to 'em! That's me, Jabez Clincher."

"Well, my Clara was eighteen, and a mighty purty gal, ef I do say it—an' I never lie, not even on the weight of a hog. Clara was superbly eddicated, and accomplished, in all thet applies ter wimmen-folks, an' thar wasn't a gal in Cin'snati as could hold a tallow candle to her, fer good looks, an' fer fine duds an' gew-gaws, sech as natterally sets a woman off."

"My bank account war gettin' tolerable fat, an' I'd formed an idea o' sendin' Clara to marry onter a duke or a lord, or sum sech racket as that; but my cackilations got knocked higher'n a kite."

"A feller come hyer from Texas, callin' hisself Ezra Moore, an' announced himself as a cattle king. He was young, good-lookin' an' evidently rich, for he dressed well, wore diamonds big as a chestnut, an' carried hisself like a gentleman."

"He spent a pile o' money, got into the best society, an' the gals went wild over him. They called him an Adonis, whatever in thunder that is—et can't be worth the hind hoof o' a hog, ef it airc anything like Ezra Moore—an' finally, the cuss got runnin' after my gal, Clara. I didn't like this, an' I told him to pick an' git. He give me some sass, an' I mopped up the street wi' him. That's the last I see'd of him fer awhile."

"Next mornin' I got a letter from my Clara, an' she sed she had eloped with her Adonis. Thunder-an'-Mars! wasn't I mad, then? Say, Bristles, help yerself to the wine!"

Beads of perspiration were standing upon Mr. Clincher's brow. It was evident that he was getting much excited. He arose and paced the floor a few minutes, and then returned to his seat.

"Waal," he said, "I swore vengeance, and set out fer Chicago. Thar I engaged a pack o' Pinkerton's men, and sent 'em down to Texas to find my darter, and her condemned Adonis. But, no use."

"I spent enough ter buy fifty carload o' hogs, but after a long search the detectives sed thar

was no trace o' Ezra Moore, in Texas. So, I hed to give up in despair.

"Two weeks ago, I got a letter from Little Rock, Arkansas. It was from Clara. She sed she an' her babe were living thar, in abject poverty, and upon the verge of starvation. She didn't know where Moore was. He had left her, a month before, after leading her a dog's life. She begged of me to send some money, as a loan, until she was strong enough to work!"

Here Mr. Clincher paused, to wipe the moisture from his eyes, with his red bandanna.

"Did you send the money?" our hero asked.

"Yas. Then, ther next day, I concluded to go myself, an' fetch hum my child, and her baby. The letter had gone ahead o' me sum eight hours, an' when I reached Little Rock, it had already bin delivered to a woman, purportin' ter be my darter, but in no way answerin' ter my Clara's description."

"Well, what else?"

"Waal, et turned out that the place to whar I'd sent the letter, war a small third-rate hotel. The woman who got the letter, and a man, along wi' a baby, hed only been stoppin' thar a week, an' war registered as Mr. an' Mrs. E. Moore. As soon as they got the letter, the critters decamped, leavin' an unpaid board-bill. No one know'd whar they'd gone."

"How did you remit the money?"

"Registered letter."

"How much did you send?"

"Five hundred dollars, in fifty dollar greenbacks!"

Dick gave a whistle of astonishment.

"That's a pile of money to transmit through the mails, Mr. Clincher."

"Mebbel! But, you kin bet no gal o' mine was a-goin' ter suffer for want o' money!"

"Did you receive the customary receipt of the letter's delivery?"

"Yas."

"Let me see it."

Mr. Clincher produced a well-filled wallet, extracted the yellow card from it, and handed it to the detective.

Dick examined it, thoughtfully.

"The card is signed by Ezra Moore, for Clara Moore?"

"Yas."

"Ezra Moore got the money?"

"Et looks it!"

"Were your inquiries, in Little Rock, such as to make you positive that the woman who had been stopping at the hotel under the name of Moore, was not your daughter?"

"Teetotally positive. My gal was short, plump an' had blondish hair. Ther woman who was stoppin' at the hotel war a six-footer, raw-boned, an' black-haired. Ye see thar's no mistaken 'twar not my darter."

"Did the description of the man answer to that of your Ezra Moore?"

"To a capital T! Same condemned critter, 'thout a doubt!"

"Then, you've evidently been swindled?"

"Sure!"

"But where's your daughter?"

Jabez Clincher groaned.

"Dead, maybe. Yet, I hev hopes ter ther contrary!"

"On what do you base them?"

"That she is the victim of a conspiracy!"

"Give me an idea of what you mean."

"Well, in the first place, about six months ago, my darter Clara and Car'line, were each left a hundred thousand dollars, by their uncle, in the West, and their cash was transferred to my care, in trust fer the children. I immedgetly advertised in Texas an' other Western papers, that my darter had fallen heir to a fortune, an' I wanted her to cum home. If this met ther eye of Ezra Moore, he's jest villain enuff ter git up a plot ter get hold of the fortune See?"

"There's a possibility you may be right," Deadwood Dick acquiesced. "It seems strange he should be traveling with another woman, unless your daughter is dead, or smuggled away."

"Jest my ideer, exactly, an' that's why I sent to Washington fer a capable detective. I've tried Pinkerton's men, to my heart's content. Spent a bar'l o' money, an' no returns. Now, I want ye ter run down Ez Moore, first, an' then shadder the cuss till ye find my darter. I'm sure she's alive. Kept shadderin' Moore, 'til ye find her, be it in one year or ten. I'll foot the bills, an' pay ye a good salary. Old Jabez can do it, too!"

"I've no doubt of your ability to meet your bills, Mr. Clincher, and I will do whatever I can for you; no question on that score. Now, tell

me what occurred, after you found Moore and the woman had fled from Little Rock?"

"Well, I employed local detectives, an' finally hit onto the idee that they hed struck for Cin'snati. So I come back here, a-kitin'. Last night, for the first, my 'spicion war verified. Last night, about midnight, I war passin' the Palace Hotel, when I see'd Ez Moore enter it. I watched thru the window, an' see him sign the register, an' then a boy showed him up ther stairs."

"Why didn't you go in and arrest him at the time?"

"I hadn't no warrant, and the hour being midnight, I couldn't well get one. Then, too, I couldn't well get it inter my noggin that he wouldn't be at the hotel in ther mornin'. But, this mornin', they allowed he wasn't thar. That's what raised the fuss!"

"Do you still believe that he is there?"

"I do!"

"But, most likely under an assumed name?"

"Mebbe."

"Can you describe him?"

"He's about five feet ten, thirty years old, full round' face, no beard, black eyes and hair, and a kinder impudent expression o' countenance. When I see'd him last night, he wore a checked cape overcoat, striped trous'rlooms, an' a Kossuth sort o' hat!"

"If he's at the hotel, I'll find him, and let you know!" Dick said, rising. "Remain at home, so a telegram may reach you, without delay!"

"Telephone will reach me, quickest,—444 Auburn!"

"Very well."

Then, Dick took his departure.

CHAPTER III.

THE CHAMBER CONFERENCE.

MR. CLINCHER'S belief that Ezra Moore was at the Palace Hotel, was not incorrect.

During the melee in the office, a tall, dark-bearded man, of somewhat Southern aspect, had been an interested looker-on, and listener.

His erect figure, and broad chest gave him something of a military bearing.

He was past middle age, well dressed, and not at all bad looking, except for one peculiarity—an almost savage knitting of the brows, which seemed to reflect a sullen nature.

He stood slightly aloof from the rest of the crowd, and, to an ordinary observer, took no interest in the quarrel further than idle curiosity.

When old Clincher and Deadwood Dick had taken their departure, however, his manner changed. He hastened to the broad staircase, and went up-stairs, almost two steps at a time. On the third flight, he rapped at a door, briskly.

"Come in!" bade a voice from within, and he obeyed.

Ezra Moore was reclining upon the bed, with a newspaper in his hand.

Clincher's description of him was correct, with the exception that the man's face was pale and haggard.

"Abl King, is that you?" Moore saluted. "How's the weather, out? I havn't taken pains to look out of the window, yet. Odd of me, is it not?"

"Devilish odd!" King retorted, dryly. "The weather is all right!"

Something in the tone of his voice was so significant, that Ezra Moore glanced at him more sharply.

"Is there anything else that is not all right?" he demanded.

"Yes, there is!"

"What is it?"

"Old Clincher has been below, raising a row!" Moore sat up on the bed, looking interested.

"What about?" he queried.

"About you!"

"The deuce you say! Explain!"

"Well, Clincher saw you enter the hotel, last night, and register. This mornin' he came to the hotel, and demanded to see you. When told that no such a person as Ezra Moore was a guest of the house, he called both the clerk and landlordliars, wiped the floor up with Jim Jones, the bouncer, and kicked up a row generally. Finally, two policeman were sent for, but before they arrived, Clincher was approached by a young man who said he wanted to see Clincher on important business, and he rushed the pork king off in a hack!"

"Who was the young man?"

"A detective, I suspect!"

Moore laughed.

"They didn't find me!"

"That doesn't signify they won't!"

"What must I do?"

King reflected.

"I hardly know what to advise!" he said, thoughtfully.

"The chances are if you remain here, a warrant will be issued and the hotel searched. In that case you would be found, and it would be all up with you. On the other hand, if you try to slide away, there's more chances than one that detectives will be watching every person that leaves the hotel, and nab you!"

"What makes you think this?"

"Because old Clincher is madder than a singed bull, and if he gets a hold of you, he'll break your head. I believe you have had some experience with him, physically speaking."

"Well, I'm a bigger man than you, and know pretty fairly how to handle myself, but after seeing the pork king mop up the floor with big Jim Jones, and fling him half-way across the room, as though he were a clothing-house manikin, I want no Clincher in mine!"

Moore gritted his teeth, and his eyes, blood-shot as they were, flamed wickedly.

"What makes you think the chap who took Clincher off is a detective?"

King shrugged his broad shoulders.

"The cut of his jib!"

"How do you mean?"

"A cool, keenly-outlined countenance, and a keener pair of eyes, that never miscarry, in their searching glance. I've come in contact with many detectives, but rarely failed to single one out. If this chap is a detective, as I have no doubt, he knows his biz, and will be to you a dangerous enemy."

"He must die. If not, I'm lost. Would you know him if you saw him again?"

"Yes, most assuredly. When I study a man's face, it is always indelibly photographed upon my memory."

"Would you undertake the job?"

"I think not. I'm not disposed to that sort of business."

"Yet I have heard you have done it."

"That remains to be proven."

"What will you take to do the job?"

"You have no money. Why, it's my money, hard earned at the green-table, that is supporting you here."

Moore scowled.

"It's mighty sarcastic you're getting of late. I believed you to be my friend."

"Have I ever proved different in the course of our association?"

"No. Yet you refuse to do this!"

"Yes. I am done with that sort of business. I am here to shield you, in so far as protection is of avail, but ask of me no crime."

"But, there is a fortune at stake!"

King shrugged his shoulders.

"Maybe!" he said, "but you've not got it yet. After seeing old Clincher, I'm not sure you will get it very soon. The old man is no fool, and I'll bet he will make a stubborn fight."

Moore was silent a moment, his brows knitted in a frown.

"I don't believe it, when he knows everything. He loved his daughters, and when he knows Clara is dead, and that he can get possession of her child by disbursing a moderate sum of money, you bet he won't refuse!"

"I wouldn't like to stake my life on that. Although rough and illiterate, Clincher is not a slow man, or he would never have acquired his immense fortune in business. My estimate of Clincher is that he'd spend a hundred thousand dollars on detectives, where he wouldn't spend that many cents to benefit a rascal's schemes!"

Moore leaped from the bed to his feet, his face flaming with anger.

"This to me, Cap King!" he cried, fiercely.

"Certainly. Sit down, and don't be a fool. We've chummed together too long to have a split, especially at this stage of the game. Be kind enough to keep your temper. I'm not a man to stand too much nonsense!"

Moore sunk back upon the bed, and remained in grim silence a few minutes, while Cap King walked over to the window.

"What is Juna doing?" Moore finally demanded; "in her room, I suppose?"

"Yes," King answered, without looking around at the speaker, "and half-drunk, at that!"

"So much the better. Go send her here, and you go below and keep your eyes open. If you see anything of the detective, send for Juna. She will do the work you've not the nerve to do. You know her game never falls her!"

King turned from the window, with something like a shudder, and left the room, but once the door was closed after him, a strange—a most peculiar smile wreathed his lips.

What did it signify?

CHAPTER IV.

THE BULL-DOG FROM BUTTE.

In the next room adjoining that of Ezra Moore, was a new arrival in Cincinnati.

He had come to town on the late Western Express, the night previous, and, although he was a rather eccentric and rough-looking individual, he had been successful in securing, at the Palace, a comfortable room, upon exhibiting to the envious eyes of the night-clerk a huge roll of bank-notes, of large denomination, "tipping" the clerk with a five-dollar gold piece and filling him up with wine.

"I allow I ain't much fer looks," he had observed, "an' I don't sport a tailor-shop on me back, but you bet yer boots I kin show up more o' the sugar than any o' yer guests, ef I don't w'ar shine-up shoes an' white neckties. An', when ye cum to consider, me ruby, thet I kerries never less than half a million in me clo'se, an' owns a ten thousan' ranch, an' three gold-mines, at Butte City, Montana, an' can buy up a town wi' my check, I'm no slouch!"

The night clerk was immediately filled with admiration for this bold and moneyed individual from the land of the setting sun, even as he was being filled with good wine; and thus it was, that, shortly before daybreak, Mr. Bill Book, of Butte City, found himself comfortably in bed, in the room next adjoining the one occupied by that desperate villain, Ezra Moore.

Mr. Book's advent, was destined to create a sensation among the aristocratic of the Palace Hotel's patronage, where some of the first people in the land, in their visits to Porkopolis, were wont to stop, for Mr. Book's make-up and general personal appearance were something above the ordinary.

He stood six-foot-six, in his socks, and tipped the beam at something like two hundred pounds, although one would scarcely have credited it, judging by his raw-boned appearance. His legs and arms were extremely long, but of good size, while his trunk was well-knit, and indicated great powers of endurance.

His face was a study. It reminded one of a bull-dog.

He wore no beard. His hair was "fighting" red. His dress was not calculated to create a furor in a fashionable hotel or dining room.

Beginning at the bottom, he wore a pair of long-legged boots, and with soles an inch thick. Next came a pair of well-worn, trowsers of corduroy, belted at the waist with a cartridge belt; then a buckskin shirt, liberally perforated with holes; and for a necktie, a piece of braided silk, formed like a noose.

This completed the Westerner's costume so far as concerns our story, but he made a truly ludicrous contrast to the Palace's well-dressed patrons.

After being shown to his room, Bill Book, of Butte City threw himself upon the bed, without undressing, and proceeded to take a snooze.

"I'm mighty lucky to git sich 'commydations, by ther blazes!" he commented. "These high-toned Eastern hotel-keepers seem ter 'spect a feller to be dressed ter kill, afore they kin get 'commydations. 'Tain't so in Butte City, cussed if it is!"

And then the gentleman from the Butte relapsed into sound repose.

As a rule, Western men are not sleepers of the long and steady kind. They sleep well, but awake at the slightest sound. It is the force of habit.

When Book, of Butte, awoke, it was by hearing voices in the adjoining room.

He sat up on the bed, and listened.

A door communicated between his room and the next.

It was closed, of course and locked, no doubt, but, as Book's bed ran alongside it, he was afforded a capital opportunity to play the eaves-dropper.

After listening a moment, he muttered.

"Blarst et, my ears somehow seem out o' kilter. I allow I need an eye-opener!"

Opening a small hand-bag, which was his only luggage, he brought forth a pint flask of whisky, and placing the mouth of it to his lips, he drained it of its contents.

It would have killed an ordinary man stone dead, this enormous dose of liquid fire, but Mr. Bill Book, of Butte, was not by any means an ordinary man. He was as tough as steel, his life having been one of hardships; then, too, after the fashion of many Westerners, he had literally been brought up on the "bug-juice" bottle.

"Thar! I'll allow the Bull-dog o' Butte feels better," he muttered, rubbing his stomach, with a smile of satisfaction. "Now, then, I want

know what's goin' on in next room. I heerd some galoot ejeck a swear, an' when any cuss will swear in sech a temple o' grub as this, et must signalfy thet thar's suthin' wrong!"

So he rolled onto the bed again, and assumed a listening attitude, his ear close to the communicating door.

And there he lay, motionless as a log, listening to the conversation between Ezra Moore, and Cap King.

He seemed deeply interested, for several times he started.

It was when he heard a name mentioned.

The name was "Jabez Clincher!"

"By thunder! so thar's trouble in the Clincher camp, is thar!" he mused. "Lucky I come as I did. Thar'll be war, now. Them sharks, in next room—but hang it, I ken't understand et all, darn my socks ef I kin! Reckon the bug-juice warn't quite strong enuff ter stir up my stum-mick, an' lubricate my thinkin'-machine so et would run right!"

Just then, he overheard Moore give orders to King to summon Juna, and then go below, and watch for developments.

"I must see this King!" the Bull-dog muttered, and donning his head-gear, he quickly left his room, and passed Moore's door, just as Cap King came out.

A swift glance at the captain, a swifter glance into the room, that was rewarded with a glimpse of Moore; then, the Bull-dog of Butte passed on, and went down the stairs.

When he reached the office, he sauntered leisurely about, apparently unconscious of the astonished glances of the well-dressed aristocrats, who were distributed about the office and reading-rooms—wealthy business men, a sprinkling of congressmen, and political magnates, not to mention a real live lord, from "Hengland, you know"—eye-glass and all, a regular swell, by the way.

To the man from Butte, this dude appeared to be a great curiosity, and, after eying him for a time, he walked up and slapped him familiarly on the shoulder.

"Why, helloa, pard! What range did ye blow down from?" the Bull-dog cried. "Darn my ducats, but ye'r a reg'lar rip-snorter in them store-clothes! Where'd ye strike et rich? In the mines or in the cattle biz? Cattle biz is poor this year, 'count o' 'lection!"

His lordship shrunk back as if shot.

"Sir-rh!" he gasped, "I do not know you!"

"Hey! Oh, don't ye? Why, darn it, man, hain't you Mose Luggins, o' Dakota?"

"Never was in Dakota, sir!"

"No! Well, I'll swear! Ye'r the livin' picter of Mose Luggins, after he broke all the faro banks in Fargo. Lord! but *didn't* he put on the style, tho! Ye couldn't tech him wi' greased lightning. Oh, say, I fergot. He was lynched fer hoss-stealing shortly after that! But, I say, you do look mighty like him. Come! Let's go and liquor up!"

"Aw! Thanks, awfully, but I never drink!" the son of Britain declared, edging further away.

"Never drink?" echoed the Bull-dog. "Never drink!? Why, may I be stung by tarant'lers, an' kicked to death by mules, ef ye orten't be ashamed o' yerself! Why, out our way, a man who can't take his whisky, an' take it straight, is no earthly good. Even the keotes an' rattlesnakes shun him. Now, let me tell ye a keote aire a pestiferous anymile, and even me, ther Barkin' Bull-dog o' Butte City, don't like 'em. But I will say one snorter their credit. In their own humble way they do appreciate a man who takes his whisky straight. Now, when they strike a man o' this kind, they dissect the meat from his bones so clean that they are as white as an elerfant's tusks; but, when they come across a teetotaler, a dude, or an anti-poverty chap, they jest simply turn a cold shoulder, give a screech o' disgust, and fold their tent, and sneak silently henceward. Better come and h'ist some p'izen, deacon!"

The Bull-dog from Butte City had no time for further arguments.

A heavy hand was clapped upon his shoulder, and he was wheeled around facing the proprietor of the hotel.

"Well, sir," that gentleman thundered, "who are you, and what are you doing here?"

"Who? Me?"

"Yes, you!"

"What's that *your* business, stranger? First tell me who *you* are!"

"I am the proprietor of the hotel, and if you do not answer me it will be the worse for you!"

"The devil! You're the high cockolorum as runs the shebang, hey? By blazes, excuse me!

Shake! I'm Bill Book, the Barkin' Bull-dog from Butte City, Montana!"

"Well, Mr. Bill Book, be kind enough to explain your presence here."

"Why, hain't ye looked at yer registeryation book? Ef ye do, you find thet I occupy room 77!"

"When did you arrive?"

"Oh, I whooped inter town 'bout midnight, and as I allowed, thru recommendation o' Senator Ingalls, whom I met on the train, thet this were as likely a shebang as I would find, I waltzed in, secured a room, paid a month's rent in advance, filled yer clerk chuck-a-block with expensive drinks, an' went to roost! Anything else?"

"Yes. It is my painful duty to inform you that you cannot longer remain a guest of this house."

"I can't, hey?"

"No, sir."

"Why not?"

The Montana man's eyes began to show unmistakable signs of fire.

"For the simple reason that we cannot accommodate you. We do not cater to your class. You are obnoxious to my guests, because you are wholly unfit to mingle among refined people. So you must go. Your money will be refunded, at the desk, and I will have your baggage brought down!"

"Slow up, boss! If that baggage is teched, I'll let daylight through you! D'ye know who I am!"

"No! nor do I care!"

"Well, sir, I'm the son of Jabez Clincher, the millionaire pork king!"

"I don't care a fig if you were a Vanderbilt, sir. You cannot remain here!"

"I intend to go, but, listen ter me. While ye can't 'commydate a respectable Western man, ye can harbor thieves and murderers. Thar's two of 'em in the room next to mine. Yesterday, my old dad called to inquire for one of 'em, and received disgraceful treatment. That's all. Fetch down my grip, refund my ducats, and I'll go. Cuss me ef I want to remain in yer refined society any longer. We've got bears out around Butte City that aire more refined than you!"

The landlord stared; then his face flamed with anger.

Spying Deadwood Dick, who had entered in time to overhear the foregoing conversation, and whom he knew to be a detective, he cried.

"Here, Mr. Bristol, arrest this ruffian!"

Dick shook his head.

"Sorry, sir, but I cannot accommodate you!"

"Why not?"

"Because I've overheard what has just transpired, and would be doing Mr. Jabez Clincher's son, an injustice!"

"How so?"

"Because he is not in fault and you *are*!"

"You're a fool!"

"You're a greater one; so while you refund one guest's money, you'd better make it two, as I cannot find it in my conscience to remain here, longer!"

"Very well!" and turning to the clerk Mr. Maxwell ordered:

"Refund these men their money in full, and have their luggage brought down!"

The Bull-dog of Butte advanced, and extended his hand to the detective.

"You're from the West!" he said.

"How do you know?"

"'Cause you've got the Western grit inter yer carcass."

"I am from the West!"

Then, they shook hands.

"I know'd it!" young Clincher declared. "I know, you, too, or of you!"

"Who am I, and what do you know of me?"

The Bull-dog from Butte answered in a whisper:

"Ye'r the feller they call Deadwood Dick, Junior?"

"Right you are! How did you know?"

"By ther name o' Bristol."

"Ah! I am glad to meet you. You are Mr. Clincher's son, I overheard you say."

"I am, tho' he does not know I'm alive. Do you know the old gent?"

"Yes. I am in his employ."

"As a detective?"

"Yes."

"Be ye the chap as got the old gent out o' the scrape, this mornin'?"

"Yes."

"Bully fer you! You're white, you are, an' twixt dad an' I we'll make you rich. But, what about my sister Clara? Ther's somethin' I don't quite get thr'u' my noggin'."

"Are you going to your father's?"

"I reckon I might as well."

"Of course. I will explain matters on the way."

They then went to the counter and were promptly refunded the money they had paid in advance.

"I'm exceedingly sorry this should have happened," the junior member of the firm declared. "Had I had my way there would have been no trouble!"

"Oh! well, accidents will happen, in the best regulated hotels!" Dick replied, with a shrug. "There are plenty of hotels in Cincinnati, so we'll not be left out in the cold!"

The baggage was then brought down, and Dick had his taken to the Burnet.

Then a cab was called, which the detective and the Bull-dog entered, and were driven toward Mount Auburn.

On the way Dick explained the situation to young Clincher.

In return, he received valuable information, regarding what the Bull-dog overheard in the room adjoining his.

Also, an accurate description of the man, Cap King.

"As soon as I've landed you at your father's," Dick said, "I must return and follow the trail!"

They soon reached Mr. Clincher's, and father, son and sister were most joyfully reunited.

It appeared that William Clincher had run away from home, when a boy, to make his fortune—since then nothing had been heard from him, and he had been given up for dead.

He had made his pile, and now returned to the parental roof.

Dick lingered only long enough to tender his congratulations, then started back down-town.

He had work to do.

CHAPTER V.

A FEW WORDS WITH MR. KING.

As the hack that was bearing Deadwood Dick away from the Clincher residence was rolling down-townward, the detective began to plan his campaign.

"I'm pitted against two cunning rascals," he muttered, "and I shall have to be wide awake to flank them. Now, let me see: I shall know this man, King, by the Bull-dog's description, I reckon, but I won't dare venture to the Palace Hotel again, except in disguise."

Before leaving the Clincher residence, old Clincher had given him a thousand dollars to work on; so when Dick reached Fifth and Vine streets, he left the conveyance, and repaired to the nearest clothing house, where he purchased for himself a complete outfit of an expensive and fashionable sort, and ordered it sent to the Burnet House.

On his arrival at the Burnet he found his trunk already there, and his purchase of clothing soon followed.

Then he had baggage and box taken to the room which had been assigned him, and he followed in its wake.

He then proceeded to disguise himself.

It did not take long to get into his new suit, which, when he had added a glossy silk hat, gave him already a much altered appearance, and when he had dextrously added a full false beard and wig of jetty black, his identity was almost totally hidden.

He then left his room, and the office of the Burnet being unusually crowded, he passed unnoticed from the hotel, proceeding over to the Palace Hotel, where a similar crowd was congregated.

Election matters were getting literally red-hot, and all the "big guns" could be found about the principal hotels.

There were strangers in the lobbies and reading-rooms, who were not guests, and so Dick knew he had nothing to fear of being particularly noticed.

Securing a cigar, he sauntered about in search of Mr. Cap King; but, full an hour elapsed ere he found a person whom he thought might be the man.

He was standing at the bar, conversing with a burly individual who had "brute, ruffian, and dissipation" stamped all over his face, albeit he wore ordinarily good clothes.

Dick, walking up to the bar, and standing close alongside King, ordered a drink.

King wheeled, darted Dick an inquiring glance, but seeing nothing in the detective's appearance to particularly alarm him, turned his attention once more to the tough.

"All right, Boggs. You do the work, and do it well, and you will be paid well. But, mind you, don't make no botch of it, or off comes your head."

"All right, captain. Ye kin bet I allers does a job up right. Goin' to treat 'fore I go?"

"Of course. There is nothing mean about me, as you will find out if you serve me well. Bar-keeper, give us some whisky."

Dick tapped King upon the shoulder.

"Excuse me, stranger," he said, apologetically, when King wheeled around with an ugly glitter in his eyes, "but it strikes me forcibly that I've heard that voice of yours before. I may be mistaken, tho'—et's some years ago. Do you belong out Arkansaw-way?"

"Well, what if I do?" King demanded, rather belligerently.

"Oh! nothing in particular, only et struck me if you come from my native State, I'd like to ask you to drink with me—you and your friend."

"What is your name?"

"Bill Hill. I live in Argenta, over from Little Rock."

"What makes you think you have met me before?"

"Wal, I don't know, except it is your voice. I've heard a voice like it somewhere's, and if my memory serves me right, it was around the green table over in Little Rock, when a party of gentlemen were bucking the tiger. They were pretty much all strangers, and I reckon, generally speaking, did not know each other's names."

"How long ago was this?"

"A trifle over two years."

King reflected.

He was evidently on his guard.

Finally he said:

"I've lived in Little Rock all my later life, Mr. Hill, but, somehow, I don't seem to remember you."

"Likely not. When we met at the table, if meet we ever did, I wore no beard. Then, too, mine being purely a home-life, I went over to Little Rock only occasionally, having nothing to call me there, except when I wanted to go on a little tear outside of the gaze of my fellow villagers."

"What are you doing in Cincinnati, Mr. Hill, may I ask?"

"Oh, I had never been East before, and as I made a nice little pile out o' the Chicago wheat deal, thought I'd take a pleasure-trip and see what Cincinnati, New York and Philadelphia looked like. Haven't been here but a short time—only a few hours—and haven't had time to look around much, but from what I have seen, I should judge Cincinnati is a pretty big place."

"Oh, tolerable!" King replied. "Well, Mr. Hill, if you are from Arkansaw, you may rest assured I am glad to meet you, and shall be proud of the honor of drinking your good health. This gentleman is Mr. Hiram Boggs, a friend of mine."

Deadwood Dick acknowledged the introduction by shaking hands with Mr. Boggs, and then the trio imbibed.

"Well, I think I'll take a turn around and see the sights," Dick said, after King had reciprocated in the treating. "Do you put up at this hotel, Mr. King?"

"For a few days," King replied, briefly.

"All right. I'm at the Burnet. Likely I will run in and see you again."

"Do so. Drop in this evening, and perhaps we can arrange a game of poker, if you feel so disposed."

"Poker! Well, I don't consider myself much o' a hand on it, but I rather like the game, for companionship's sake. I'll be here at seven."

"Do so, and I'll assure you of a jolly good time. I've a friend stopping here, and maybe he will join in, although he's rather an unlucky cuss, if I must say it. Don't fail us, now, for I am always glad to meet a man from my own State. My friend is also from there, so we ought to make up a rather fraternal party."

"Right you are!" Dick replied. "Well, good-by. I must be off!" and shaking hands with Ezra Moore's colleague, Dick took his departure.

Once outside the hotel, he chuckled softly to himself.

"Not so bad a start, after all!" he mused. "I have gotten into the confidence of Mr. King, of Arkansas, and doubtless shall soon have the pleasure of meeting Mr. Moore, at poker. Mr. King is very shrewd and watchful. He guards his friend as an eagle would guard her young. So far, so good. You may be sharp, friend King, but, even though you were four times a king, aces will win, in this game. But, wait! You may win, to-night, on King's luck; but, what I am looking after is a solitary queen, and I'm bound to find her!"

His mind was hardly clear as to what his next move was to be, but, more mechanically

than otherwise, he retraced his way toward the Burnet House.

On the way, he kept up a terrible thinking.

To be sure he was to meet King, and perhaps Moore, that night; but, was there not something else might be done, in the meantime?

An idea struck him!

CHAPTER VI.

SIZING MATTERS UP.

The day was yet young.

The noon whistles had not yet sounded, when Deadwood Dick bethought himself of the telegraph.

"I wonder how my friend Mr. King stands, in Little Rock?" he mused. "It might not stand me out to know that. It ought not to cost a fortune to find out, anyhow!"

So he repaired to the nearest telegraph office and sent the following telegram:

"Chief of Police, Little Rock, Ark:—

"What do you know of a man, who formerly lived in Little Rock, and is known here as Captain or Cap King? Give me his history, and any information you can vouch for."

"RICHARD M. BRISTOL,

"U. S. Detective,

"BURNET HOUSE,

"Cincinnati, Nov. 1."

Dick then returned to the hotel, and at the counter, said to the head clerk:

"Can I see the landlord? It is a personal matter."

"What name?"

Dick extended a new card, which read:

RICHARD M. BRISTOL,

Detective, in the employ of the U. S. Secret Service Bureau. All advances made to him will be settled by The U. S. S. S. CHIEF.

The clerk stared, when he read this. Then, as by habit, he referred to the hotel register. Then he looked again at Dick.

"Do you stop here?" he demanded, rather than inquired.

"I do."

"Then, sir, you are in disguise."

Dick smiled.

"You are very clever!" he said. "But, now that you know me, as I am, I suppose there is no need of summoning the proprietor. You surely will remember me, and if you will introduced me to your night clerk, I will be all right. The word 'Hill,' will be the signal, whatever I may wear as a disguise. I am working on a very desperate case, and must enjoin secrecy."

"You shall have it!" the clerk replied. "I used to be on Pinkerton's force myself, and realize the work a man in the profession has to undergo." Then, turning to one of the numerous speaking tubes, he called: "Fred, come down, at once."

"He will be here soon," the clerk remarked, in a courteous way, "and I will introduce you, and after that there will be no trouble. You will be admitted at all hours, under any disguise you may assume."

"That will be satisfactory," Dick replied. "I merely wished to make myself known, so there would be no trouble as to my identity. Not a pleasant thing to be skulking around a hotel, unless you chance to be known."

"Well, rather not," the head clerk retorted.

"Fred" soon came down—a pleasant mannered fellow, to whom the head clerk introduced the detective with necessary explanations to insure his advent to his room.

Dick soon retired to his room, and remained there until the hall boy brought him up a telegram from Little Rock's chief of police, which ran something as follows:

"John (Cap) King is a blackleg, and a scoundrel, and bears a most unsavory reputation here as a forger. He is wanted, and there is a reward of two hundred dollars for him."

"So! so! Mr. King, I think I may be able to utilize you, to some purpose!" Dick mused. "You will likely not care about doing a term in an Arkansas prison, and I may be able to make you an instrument for the release of Miss Clara Clincher. At any event, it will do no harm to try."

As there was nothing in particular for him to do until night, so far as Ezra Moore and King were concerned, he once more left the hotel, and taking a cab, was driven to the Clincher residence, at Mount Auburn, where he found the family at their dinner.

He was heartily received.

"Well, what have you found out?" the elder Clincher demanded, after Dick had introduced himself in his new disguise.

"I think I am in a fair way to pick up the trail," he replied, supplementing this information with a narration of his interview with

King, and the telegram he had received from Little Rock. "I hope to learn something of importance to-night, when I meet this man, Moore."

"Would it not be best to arrest the cuss at once, and be done with it?" suggested Charley Clincher.

"By no means!" Dick replied. "That, you see, would be literally sealing your sister's fate, in case she is alive. The only thing is to keep an eye on these fellows and follow them. I think they will remain at the hotel for a spell yet, for, according to your own report, Moore is afraid of showing himself, fearful of being snapped up by officers of the law. From the conversation you overheard, I judge that the ruffian, Boggs, has been hired to assassinate your father. So it behooves you all to keep in the house as closely as circumstances will permit. In my present disguise of Bill Hill, I am unsuspected, and can do more than though I were in any way assisted by any of you."

"By the thunderin' Jeramity! I've a mind to go down ter that hotel and tread that cuss inter dust!" the elder Mr. Clincher declared, with decided vindictiveness.

"Now, dad, jest hold yer hosses, or darned ef I don't lick yer myself!" the junior Mr. Clincher protested. "You let ther detective hev his own way, an' you kin bet yer boots he'll fetch things around right. He's no slouch, even in his socks, an' he's biz cl'ar to the spinal mennungittus, an' ef ary harm comes to him, you stack yer reds on et thar'll be a raisin' meet hyar in yer willage o' Cincinnati. An' when ther Bull-dog from Butte City do declaim a thing, ther ain't a senator as durst gainsay et!"

"My son, I'm proud o' ye!" Mr. Clincher of Cincinnati averred, patting his offspring on the shoulder. "I allus knew you'd make yer mark in the world, an' ef ye go inter hogs, you'll soon be as rich as yer old dad. You shall hev yer way, too. The detective shall hev his way, an' I'll bet a hundred bar'ls o' side-pork he wins."

Dinner over, and Dick having nothing to occupy his attention until night, cards were introduced and socially played until dusk. Then, bidding the Clinchers adieu, the detective betook himself in the direction of the Palace Hotel on foot, preferring walking to riding.

He had not got three rods from the house, however, when the Bull-dog came running after him, with an utterance singularly between a snarl and a bark.

"Hold up, thar!" he howled. "Come back. Suthin' important has happened!"

Then, he turned, and strode back, after a ludicrous fashion, Dick following.

"What is it?" he demanded, as he sauntered into the parlor.

"Telegram! Messenger jist left it, after yer was out o' the house!" the Bull-dog replied. "Hyar, it is. Read it!"

Old Clincher was sitting in his arm-chair, pallid in countenance, and evidently very much agitated.

Cora was weeping on the sofa.

The Bull-dog's eyes were like fire.

Dick took the telegram to the gas-light, and read the following:

"CINCINNATI, November 1.

"JABEZ CLINCHER, Sir:—

"Your daughter (my wife) is dead. Her offspring, a boy, is in the hands of a Kentucky family, to whom, unfortunately, I had to mortgage him. He is a beautiful youngster, and you might wish to redeem him. The price is twenty thousand dollars. If you want him for that price, communicate, (with cash, in a package) with Duncan Donald, Covington, Ky., but make no attempt to send out detectives, under penalty of the child's death.

"E. M.

"per Se retary."

"P. S. If you wish to enter into this transaction, telegraph instantly to Mr. Donald, as above, but I warn you not to try to come any funny business. It won't work. I'm off for Europe, whither my deputy will bring the money. E. M."

CHAPTER VII.

DICK TAKES NO WATER IN HIS!

DICK handed the telegram back to the Bull-dog.

"I expected as much!" he said. "Nothing in it. A mere bluff, for sake of gaining money, you can depend upon it, and after that notice, I'll stake my reputation your sister is still alive, and the child, too. So pay no attention to that telegram."

"I am seriously afraid that my daughter is dead! old Jabez groaned.

"I don't believe anything of the sort!" Dick replied. "It strikes me more forcibly, now, than ever that she is alive. So don't worry, in the least, concerning this telegram, for I feel

certain there is nothing in it. I will see Moore and King, to-night, and if I learn anything of consequence, will let you know, by early telephone, to-morrow."

Then, Dick once more took his departure.

By the time he reached the Palace Hotel, it was quite seven o'clock, and he found King awaiting him in the hotel office.

"Ah! you are punctual I see!" that worthy said. "Come and have something, and then we will go up-stairs and see my friend Moore. Nice sort of fellow, you see, but a trifle under the weather, just at present."

So they repaired to the bar, and Dick took a cigar, while Mr. King, of Arkansaw, indulged in a liberal drink of whisky.

They then went up-stairs, and the detective soon found himself in the presence of Ezra Moore, to whom he was introduced.

After a chat, cards were produced, together with poker chips, and a three-handed game was begun.

The luck was all in Dick's favor, and before he had been seated an hour, he had scooped in upward of a hundred dollars.

Neither of the other two players seemed to enjoy this, as could be judged by their exchange of glances, which were anything but friendly.

"It strikes me," King remarked, after he had lost another twenty dollars, "that you know more about this game, sir, than you claimed to me!"

Dick smiled.

"I believe poker is not so much a game of science," he answered, "as it is of luck, and I seem to have a pretty good run of luck to-night, it is true."

"I should say so. In fact, I've an idea that you are a professional card-sharp, and never saw Arkansas."

"Sir!" Dick cried, rising, with assumed indignation, "I did not come here to be insulted, but at your own invitation, to play a sociable game. As that seems, now, out of the question, I think I had better retire."

"I don't know about that!" Moore cried, springing to the door, locking it, and putting the key in his pocket. Then, turning to his colleague, he added:

"By my soul, King, I believe the fellow is a spy—a detective!"

King eyed Dick a moment, in silence, but with a savage glitter in his baleful eyes.

"If I were sure of that I'd bust his infernal head for him!" he declared, vindictively.

Dick laughed, pleasantly.

"You do me an unexpected honor," he observed. "However, I hardly appreciate being shut in, like a common criminal, so if you will have the condescension to unlock that door, you will not only save yourselves trouble, but damage to the door, in the bargain, which no doubt you would be called upon to pay for."

All this was said pleasantly enough, but in a tone that had menace in it.

The two partners in crime once more exchanged inquiring glances.

Just what to make of the man who stood coolly before them, they did not seem able to decide.

"Well," King finally said, "I will tell you what I will do with you, sir! I have a suspicion, like my companion, that you came here to spy upon us, for dishonorable purposes, and if I thought sure you did, it would be the worse for you, and don't forget that. We are not men who like to have our private business pried into by spies. Promise me to say nothing of this affair—that, during our residence at this hotel, you keep clear of it, and last but not least, refund the money you have won, and we will permit you to go. Promise this, by all you hold sacred!"

"I promise nothing!" Dick returned, doggedly. "I'm not that sort of a hair-pin, and the sooner you know it the more congenial you will find it for your personal safety. Open that door!"

And into the detective's hands leaped suddenly a pair of revolvers, that had a decidedly dangerous look.

Captain King uttered a savage growl.

"You dare not shoot!" he snarled.

"Better not dare me!" Dick retorted. "Men whose lives have been spent on the far frontier are not prone to taking dares—especially, not from forgers, and scoundrels, in general! Will you open the door, Mr. King!"

King turned to Moore.

"Give me the key," he directed. "It is not befitting our honor, as gentlemen, to longer harbor this desperado."

Moore instantly gave up the key, a frightened look upon his none too ruddy face.

King arose and opened the door.

"Now, then git!" he ordered, "and look well that you keep away from this hotel, for if I get a drop on you, your name is Denis! We Arkansas gentlemen are not in the habit of being bullied by cowboys!"

"Glad to hear it," Dick smilingly replied, "and should it ever be your lot to meander beyond the raging Missouri, no doubt you will find plenty of opportunity for securing sanguinary satisfaction. If you two rascals are typical specimens of Arkansas gentlemen, I deem it an honor that Arkansas does not claim me as a citizen. Good evening, gentlemen!"

And, with a suave bow, the Prince of Detectives withdrew from the room, and left the hotel.

His first work was to make a reconnaissance to ascertain how many exits there were from the hotel, by which escape might be effected, and having satisfied himself in this respect, he stood at the corner of Fifth and Vine, in meditation, when he received a hearty slap on the shoulder, and wheeling, found himself in the serene presence of the Bull-dog from Butte.

"The blazes!" Dick ejaculated. "What are you doing here? Thought I told you to stay in the house?"

"The Bull-dog gave a sniff of disgust.

"Did, hey? Huh! what d'ye take me for? Do I look a shiverin' sky-terror, what war fetched up on ther parlor sofer? Not much! I'm ther Bull-dog from Butte, an' ther only one o' ther breed they've got out thet way, as kin fight!"

"But, what are you doing here? It's nearly midnight, you see!"

"Midnight? Huh! why, man alive, thet's ther very hour I allers howl. Ther' ain't no half-ways bull-dog as goes prowlin' around earlier'n that, or the dog-ketchers w'd gobble him up, fer sure. Ye see, I had a kinder rotten idear that mebbe, ye had got inter some complerated defickelty, and then, sez I, ef ther's a musical festival goin' on down thet way, I'm goin' ter be on hand ter howl wi' ther chair. How is things?"

"Oh! no particular developments yet," Dick replied, and related his experience in Moore's room.

"The gol-durned sneakin' coyotes!" the Bull-dog snorted, in supreme disgust. "I've a mind ter waltz up thar, and skulp 'em alive."

"Nonsense. That could do no good. But, I'll tell you what you may do. Stand here on the corner, a few minutes and keep an eye on the front and side entrances to the hotel. If you see either King or Moore, or both, leave the hotel, take the trail, and don't give it up. I'll not be gone long."

"Which way you goin'?"

"To Police Headquarters. This hotel must not remain unwatched a minute, for the two rascals will make a break, as soon as they imagine themselves, safe in doing so. I will get a couple of detectives, for night duty, as we shall need our energies for the day work. It is only by constant shadowing that we can hope for success, for I have no doubt we have as cunning a pair of scoundrels to deal with as you can scare up in the West!"

"All right, steer ahead, pard, and I'll keep my blizzard eye out fer squalls!" the Bull-dog, assured, grimly.

CHAPTER VIII.

SECURING "SUBS."

So Dick took leave of the Bull-dog from Butte, and sought a neighboring drug-store.

"Can you direct me," he asked, after purchasing a cigar, "so that I can quickly and easily find Police Headquarters?"

"Police court is at Ninth street and Central avenue. Do you wish to go by cars?"

"No, by cab. That will be much the quickest, I presume?"

"Yes, from here it will be."

"Have you a telephone, by which I could make verbal communication?"

"We have, but, if you are in any hurry, I think you will find it advantageous to go in person, for, after this hour of night, the telephone company is not very noted for being expeditious in the transaction of business. At least I have not found them so, and being night clerk, here, I have frequent occasion to use the 'phone."

"Thank you, no doubt you are right. I am very much obliged to you."

Dick then left the store, and hiring a cab, was soon at Police Headquarters, and in the presence of the night captain, an astute looking man with an eagle eye.

Dick introduced himself by presenting his card, and exposing his shield.

"Ah! Bristol! Bristol!" and the captain scratched his head, thoughtfully. "It occurs to me I've heard of you before, in connection with some Western work—at Denver, I've an idea."

"Yes, I worked up a job there, within the present year," Dick replied.

"Yes, yes! Well, Mr. Bristol, I am right glad to meet you. Of what service can I be to you?"

"I am at work on a very important case!" Dick explained. "Do you happen to have a couple of private detectives I can employ for night-watchers—men who can be implicitly relied upon to attend to the duty assigned them? Their pay will be satisfactory, and they can go off duty at seven in the morning. My partner and I will look after the day work."

"What is the nature of the job?" the captain asked. "Of course we are, in a measure, in duty bound to accommodate you, but we always like to know something of a case when we place our men."

"Nothing more natural. The case is this: At one of your principal hotels two adroit scoundrels are stopping, who will attempt to escape from the city at first opportunity, when they think they will not be liable to be nabbed. They are associates in a heinous scheme concerning one of your well-known citizens and his daughter."

"It is not our purpose to arrest them just yet, but it is imperative that when they leave that hotel, their every movement be shadowed, be it for a day, a week, or a year. Their movements, actions, and associations must be known. The gentleman in whose employ I am will foot all the bills, he being several times over a millionaire."

The captain elevated his eyebrows.

"And who may your employer be, if the case is of such magnitude?" he queried.

"Mr. Jabez Clincher. You probably know of him?"

The captain whistled.

"Well, I should say so! He is a personal acquaintance of mine."

"Well, he is the backer."

"Then that settles that. You shall have the men. I know the pay will be all right. We've furnished Clincher with men before, but they were not successful on the work. And so you have got hold of the case?"

"Yes."

"Do you expect to win?"

"I do. I have for a number of years been remarkably successful."

"But you'll find this a tough one."

"Maybe—maybe not. I have to say I never lost a case yet!"

"Then you are phenomenon. Who are those men?"

"One is Moore, the other a scamp of the same caliber."

"What hotel are they at?"

"The Palace. Of course that don't cast any reflection on the place, as they are there under assumed names."

"Oh, of course! When do you want your men?"

"At once."

"You are sure that those men are at the hotel?"

"Positive. I have seen them both."

"Why not arrest them, and have done with the matter at once?"

"Because they must be shadowed until they disclose the whereabouts of Clara Clincher, if she be living, and of her son, whom I have proof is living."

The captain shrugged his great broad shoulders.

"I'm of the opinion that you have tackled a tough job," he said. "However, that's none of my business. I wish you all success in the world. Here, Jerry!"

This to the office messenger, who was fast asleep.

Jerry arose, with a yawn, rubbed his eyes, and shuffled to the desk.

"Go order Stinson and Blackman to report immediately for duty," the captain ordered.

"Tell them it's important. Hurry, now!"

Jerry left the office with but a little more alacrity than a snail, and during his absence, Dick and the captain had a smoke and a chat.

The detectives arrived in about half an hour. They were shrewd, wide-awake looking fellows, and after being introduced to Deadwood Dick, the police captain briefly but clearly explained what they were wanted for.

They agreed to enter Dick's employ at a moderate stipulated amount per diem, and Dick at once clinched the bargain with a retainer.

Then they left for Fifth and Vine streets, in

the cab which Dick had chartered, and *en route*, he gave the detectives a description of Moore and King.

"Oh! I'll know Moore, when I see him," Stinson remarked. "I had a deal with him, some years ago, and got soaked, and I'm not after forgotten his mug, bad luck to him!"

When they reached Fifth and Vine streets, the Bull-dog was still doing duty, with the pertinacity of the canine from whom he had taken his most extraordinary nickname.

"Any news?" Dick queried, as he and his companions alighted from the conveyance.

"N'thin' more than that King waltzed down stairs, got a bottle filled, and waltzed back ag'in. Reckon they're corraled safe enuff, fer the night."

"It may be, but it won't do to take any rocky chances, you see. They may try to take a sneak in the morning's early hours."

He then issued instructions to the local detectives, and entering the cab, he and the Bull-dog were driven to Mount Auburn, where they were soon in sound repose, in the latter's room.

Dick was so much fatigued, through his exertions of the previous day, that he slept like a burgomaster. And the chances are big that he would have slept until noon, had he not been awakened at daybreak, by young Clincher rudely shaking him.

"Get up! get up!" the Bull-dog cried.

"Why, what's the matter?" Dick sleepily demanded.

"Matter? Why, darn it, there's heaps the matter. The old man's been salivated!"

"What?"

"True as acorns grows on oaks!"

"You don't mean killed? Impossible!"

"Waal, no, he hain't dead, but some galoot hes carved him up purty much. Guess he ain't dangerous off, but he aire rather carved up, an' ye kin bet on et!"

"This is Boggs's work," Dick decided, as he leaped out of bed, and began to dress himself, "an' that devil, King, hired him to do it!"

CHAPTER IX.

A COWARDLY ASSAULT—ESCAPED.

It did not take the detective long to dress, and then he followed the Bull-dog hastily down-stairs—for Mr. Clincher occupied a suite of rooms on the first floor, just off the parlor.

Here a terrible sight awaited Dick's gaze.

In the parlor, instead of in his own apartments, the elder Clincher lay, outstretched upon the floor, unable to arise, from weakness through loss of blood, with which the moquette carpet was literally saturated.

He was liberally slashed up, about the face, with a knife, and, as Dick found, on examination, had two shots in the left breast.

But they were not deep, nor of such a character as to cause alarm.

Mr. Clincher was unconscious.

"Is the old man a goner?" whispered the Bull-dog.

"Nothing of the sort!" Dick replied.

"He's better than a graveyard full o' dead men, yet. Where's your sister?"

"In bed."

"Go call her. I want bandages!"

"I'm afraid tew, pard. Ye know gals ain't got as strong narves as—"

"Nonsense!" retorted Dick, sharply. "I'll bet Miss Cora has more nerve than you have, in a crisis of this sort. Go do my bidding, and then hurry back. D'ye hear?"

The Butte City Bull-dog stared. He was not used to being bossed about in this style, evidently; but, catching the determined glimmer in Deadwood Dick's eyes, he left the room and ambled off up-stairs, in search of his sister.

It was barely daybreak, and Dick presumed the official with whom he had consulted the previous evening would not yet be off duty; so he sought the telephone, one of which instruments graced the Clincher library, and called up the Central Office.

"Hello! that you, Central?"

"Correct."

"Give me Police Headquarters."

"All right. Good-by."

"Good-by."

Jing-a-ling-a jing!

"Hello!"

"Hello!"

"Is that you, captain?"

"Yes. Who are you?"

"Bristol, detective."

"What do you want?"

"Have the force keep a sharp lookout for a man called Boggs—a tough—and arrest him at sight!"

"All right. What for?"

"Attempted murder."

"All right. Good-by."

"Good-by!"

Jing-a-ling-a jing!

When Dick got back to the parlor the Bull-dog had returned.

"Sis will be down in a minnit!" he announced. "She's got grit, sis has, by blazes! She tuk the matter calmer than I thort she would, lynch me ef she didn't! She's clear Clincher, frum hoof to horns, an' don't ye fergit that!"

Dick made no reply, but set to work. Experience now stood him in well, for it had made him a capital impromptu surgeon.

As soon as Cora came down, pale, but more composed than Dick had thought she would be under the circumstances, he ordered brandy and bandages, and soon was dressing Clincher's wounds, with delicate and skillful touch.

"Is he dangerously hurt?" Cora asked, with much concern.

"I should say not," he replied. "He'll no doubt be sore for a time, but he is one of those tough old Yankee hickory-nuts that is hard to crack. We'll be having him talking of pork in a few days, never fear."

The impromptu surgeon at length had old Clincher patched up so that he might have been mistaken for an Egyptian mummy of huge size.

Brandy was then urged down his throat, and had the effect to restore him to consciousness.

He opened his eyes, stared around him a moment confusedly, then, with a snort, sat bolt upright.

"Thunder 'n' Mars! What's the matter?" he demanded, feeling of his face.

"You ought to know best," Dick replied.

"You were found here on the parlor floor, taking a swim in your own blood, and I've been trying to put you together as best I could. How do you feel?"

"Like as if I'd been chawed up by a passel of condemned hogs, what hadn't had no corn fer a month. Give me some brandy. I feel as weak as a stuck shoat!"

"I don't wonder. You've lost enough gore to make an elephant stagger," Dick replied, as he administered the drink. "You've had a tough time of it, but if you keep quiet for a few days you will come out all right."

Swallowing the brandy, Clincher sat for a few minutes in silence, staring at the blood-soaked carpet.

"Looks as ef I had been in the soup," he muttered.

Then, rising, he walked to the pier-glass and took a survey of himself.

"Huh!" he commented. "Pork is down, sure. Am I dangerously wounded?"

"Not necessarily so," Dick replied. "The most you need is quiet—perfect rest and freedom from excitement."

"Oh, I'm not dead yet," the old man said, grimly. "The Clinchers, of Clincherville, die hard."

"You bet they do!" chimed in the Bull-dog, enthusiastically. "They sprout from the old stock, and I'll go ten to one that ther old man could lick his weight in wildcats this very minnit!"

"I'd like ter have the skunk here that frescoed me, and I'd show ye!" Clincher, Sr., averred.

"Do you remember the particulars of the assault, Mr. Clincher?" Dick inquired, somewhat amused.

"Yas, some of 'em!" was the answer. "I had gone to roost, an' I 'woke up 'bout three

o'clock, an' heered some one perambulating about the parlor hyer. I got up, slid inter my clothes, and waltzed out here, to see who it was—an' I drew a prize. I see, dark as it was, that et was a burglar, and I immegetly went fer him fer all I was wu'th, an' we hed a lively tussle, I kin tell you. I finally got a terrific whack over the head, and that's the last I remember."

"Don't remember being carved up, eh?"

"No. I haven't got the slightest recker-leckshun of it."

"Well, do you remember what kind of a lookin' man it was who assaulted you?"

"No—that is, not enuff so I could describe him. Ef I was ever to see him ag'in, tho', I could pick him out."

"Do you remember if he was short and stout?"

"Yes, he was just that."

"Then, I know him. It was Boggs, the man 'who was conversing with Cap King, in the bar of the Palace Hotel, and there can be no doubt that a job was put up to kill you. I have already telephoned the police to look out for Boggs. Have you lost any money?"

Clincher felt for his pocketbook.

"By thunder, yes. My wallet is gone!"

"How much was in it?"

"Nearly a thousand dollars. My gold watch and chain is missin', too! I've been both robbed and murdered."

"Not quite murdered," Dick returned, "but you had a close call for it."

"What's to be did?"

It was the Bull-dog who asked this.

"I don't know," Dick replied, "except to leave the Boggs matter to the police for investigation. We shall have all we can do to look after the other case. And that reminds me, we'd better be getting down-town. Stinson and Blackman go off duty at seven, and we must be at our post. Miss Cora can look after your father's welfare better than either of us, no doubt."

"Who aire Stinson and Blackman?" demanded Mr. Clincher.

Dick briefly explained.

"Good!" Clincher commented. "I see you've nothing left undone, and I'm glad of it. D'ye think them skunks will try to sneak away from the hotel?"

"Yes—if they see a chance."

"Then you've made arrangements ter foller ther cusses?"

"Yes. Unless my plans miscarry, we'll be close onto their heels."

"Yer kin bet we will!" emphatically declared Clincher, Jr. "An' ef ye heer ther howl of a college-educated bull-dorg anywhere within a hundred mile o' heer, ye kin put et down that we've won the pot."

"Go et, boys—go et, my sons!" old Clincher said, tears filling his eyes—"for ye'r both like sons to me, darned ef ye ain't. An' if ye need money, or want a hand in a fracas, jest work the wires, and old Clincher will be thar, ef et takes a leg."

Dick and the Bull-dog set out for down-town in the Clincher carriage.

"I didn't want you or your sister to be alarmed," Dick said, *en route*, "but your father has had a mighty close call. Only for his wonderful vitality, he'd have been in need of a wooden overcoat, ere now."

The Bull-dog looked anxious.

"Ye don't reckon he's likely to croak, do ye?"

"He ain't the kind as dies easy, as he said. Do you know, however, whether he has got his will made or not?"

The Bull-dog smiled.

"Yes. It was made yesterday afternoon, before I jined ye in ther evenin'. I suggested it, and ther old man consented."

"Good idea. Then the sharks at the hotel won't have a chance to get a finger in the pie, even if your father should pop off."

The Bull-dog grinned.

"Nary a finger! I happen to hev an idea

or two, ef I hev spent most o' my life 'mong' wolves, coyotes an' rattlesnakes, an' occasional turkey-buzzards. Thar be some anamiles ain't as smart as a thoroughbred bull-dorg."

"You're right, there," Dick admitted. "From what I have seen of you, Mr. Clincher, I see no reason why you should underrate yourself."

"Oh! I'm nothin' but a howlin' bull-dorg!" Clincher declared, with a shrug; "but, wher I howl, I ginerally make myself heard fer a mile."

They were soon at Fifth and Vine, where they alighted.

It was not quite seven A. M., by Dick's watch; nevertheless, Stinson and Blackman, the detectives, were nowhere to be found.

"This is a rum go!" Dick growled. "Them chaps were not to go off duty until seven, and it's not seven yet, by a jugful."

"Ef they've desarted, they orter be strung up," the Bull-dog asseverated.

Just then, a bootblack approached.

"Be either you fellers Bristol?" he asked.

"I'm the man!" Dick replied. "Why do you inquire, my boy?"

"Because I've got a letter fer ye. Jimmy Stinson give it to me, an' sed I was ter watch fer a hack wi' two fellers, one having a bull-dog face. Guess yer friends is after the persimmons."

Dick seized the extended letter, in nervous haste, and tore it open, to read:

"DETECTIVE BRISTOL:—

"They've gone, and we're after 'em. Come to Covington, Ky., and wait for news at the Ashbrook Hotel. We will wire you, as soon as we know anything definite.

STINSON AND BLACKMAN."

CHAPTER X.

MR. PETER PEPPER.

"WELL," Dick said, "we shall have to vamose the camp."

He then showed the letter to the Bull-dog, with the additional question:

"Ever been over there?"

"No. 'Spose we'd better tackle it, eh?"

"I see no other way. I would like to know how long they've been gone, however."

He then recalled the bootblack.

"When did you receive this note?" he demanded.

"Want yer boots shined?" asked Johnny, with a business twinkle in his eye. "Because, ye know, boss, bizness is bizness, an' a feller's tongue sometimes cleaves ter ther roof o' his mouth until his muscles git exercise."

"Well, you young rascal," Dick ejaculated. "You deserve to be beaten. You'll make a fit subject for the workhouse."

"Bin thar already," was the laconic answer. "Shine 'em, boss?"

"Yes, go ahead, if that'll open your mouth. We may be able to make some money for you, if you show less impudence and more wit."

"I'd fire the durned cuss inter the sewer," the Bull-dog growled.

"You'd find that purty hard," the bootblack retorted. "I ain't but fifteen, but I'm tough, as any o' ther gang kin tell ye. I've been in three prize-fights an' two walkin' matches, an' never got beat yet."

"Waal, you ruther make me howl!" the Bull-dog returned, in disgust, while Dick laughed heartily.

"What is your name, my boy?" he inquired.

The bootblack gave a sardonic grin.

"Give it up," he said. "I was born in a snowstorm, and never hed the pleasure of seein' my dad and mam. Allus had an ideer I was the offshoot of a marquis or a duke, or suthin' o' that sort."

"You look et," growled the Bull-dog.

"More likely ye war born of a hoss-thief."

"They christened me Peter Pepper, whar

I was fetched up," the bootblack continued, ignoring the junior Clincher, while he polished away at the boots.

"Well, go ahead and tell us when you got the letter," Dick commanded.

"Five, this mornin'."

"Do you know how they went after they left here?"

"Well, no, not 'zactly. Reckon, tho', they lit out fer der 'spension bridge."

"Do you know Covington?"

"Do I? Well, I kinder reckon! My aunt lives there, and there's where I gits my Sunday feed."

Mr. Peter Pepper had finished Dick's boots.

"Shine up my friend's," Dick directed.

Peter regarded the Bull-dog with a sullen scowl.

"Dunno as I orter," he demurred. "He's too mighty good of an opinion of hisself," at which the man from Butte was forced to laugh.

"Thet kind orter have a medal," he said. "Ef he'd go West he'd make his fortune."

"Not a-polishin' these Saratogas!"

With which caustic remark, Peter began renovating Clincher's somewhat oversized boots.

When the job was finished, Dick gave Mr. Pepper a half-dollar and said:

"Go get me a hack, and if you wish to accompany us, your pay will be four times that a day."

"Shall I take the box along?"

"No. Come, now, get a move on you!" Pepper darted away like a flash.

"Sharp lad!" Dick observed.

"He'd hang out about a day in Butte City!" the Bull-dog asseverated. "Ther remainin' six would be devoted to his memory."

Mr. Peter Pepper was assuredly a spry lad, for in less than five minutes he was back with a hack, and poked his head out of the door, with the remark:

"Here we are, boss. Corral the dorg, git in, an' tell me whar ter take yer. I'm a flea, an' skip lively."

The two men entered the hack.

"Covington," Dick ordered, "and the Ashbrook Hotel."

But the hack did not start; some one tapped at the door.

"May I see you?" a voice inquired.

Dick opened the door, and got out into the presence of the elder Mr. Maxwell.

"My dear sir," the gentleman said, "I saw you standing here, and, after a sharp study of you, I recognized you."

"Well?" Dick said, interrogatively.

"You are a friend of Mr. Jabez Clincher?"

"Yes."

"Will you convey to Mr. Clincher my sincere regrets for our very recent unpleasantness?"

"When I have time, sir. At present my time is occupied."

"Certainly. And, please say that he was right. The man he was looking for *was* here, but under an assumed name. They have gone—this morning at five o'clock—and left me an unpaid bill. When they came here I thought they were gentlemen. I have found, to my sorrow, that they were rogues."

"One was registered as Morris?"

"Yes."

"I know that. He was Moore. And his companion?"

"Cook."

Dick made a memorandum of this.

"Do you know where they went?"

"From all I can hear—I had a talk with Mr. Stinson, who told me who you were—they are off into Kentucky."

"Yes, that's correct. Is there anything more you can give me?"

"No—yes! Here is an envelope. The post-mark is Newport, Kentucky. It was found in their room!"

"Good! It may give us a clew!"

"Is it an important case?"

"So important that Mr. Clincher was nearly murdered this morning!"

"The deuce! I must go and see him at once. I say, young man, you are clever—very clever!"

"Thanks!" Dick replied. "I feel sure Mr. Clincher will be glad to see you. Please tell him that I think we are on the trail."

Dick bounded into the hack and the trio were driven rapidly away.

CHAPTER XI.

A SUSPICION ABOUT PEPPER.

HERE Dick, alone, registered, requesting his companions to remain outside. Having registered, he took them to a neighboring restaurant, and ordered breakfast for all.

While waiting for the repast, he questioned the bootblack:

"What places in Newport do you know?"

"Know ther hull place, boss. I was sprouted up in town, over the Rhine, near as I kin figger et, an' when I cum to 'turity, I left thet old cuss, Clincher, and went inter business for myself. Ther biz wasn't quite so high-toned, but ther was a darned sight more money on my side o' the ledger, by blackin' boots, an' don't yer fergit it. Clinch' was honest, but too clos't for me. He give me ten cents a day, an' I had to board myself, an' ef I didn't have a clean collar every day I was fined a quarter. Fast way o' gittin' along, hey?"

"That would seem so," Dick responded.

"But your experience seems rather queer. I have met Mr. Clincher, and I have not found him in the least close, so far. You evidently are laboring under a wrong impression of the man."

"Not a bit of it. I know him like a book."

"I've a mind to smash his head," snarled the Bull-dog.

"Better not, boss. There's a lot in it, if the hair is red, and et would cost you something to have ther mess cleaned up!"

Then there was silence; the arrival of the food meant business—not talk.

After they had breakfasted, Dick, the Bull-dog and Peter Pepper returned to the hotel, where the latter two registered, and were assigned rooms, by the detective's order.

Dick went to his own, which had previously been given him, and waited, in a state of reflection. If his sub-detectives were on the track, they would soon inform him, he argued; so, not knowing what time he might be called upon for action, he laid down and took a nap.

This occupied a couple of hours, by which time the Bull-dog rapped upon the door loudly:

"Cattle on ther ranch!"

Opening the door, the Bull-dog stood there with a messenger.

"News!" the Bull-dog announced.

Dick took the message, which proved to be from Stinson and Blackman, and was sent from Newport, Ky.

"Not sure that we are on the right track," it said, "but feel confident. However, come on, with money. Our own is near played out."

"Mighty indefinite," Dick mused, "but I suppose we shall have to go. Tell Pepper to come here!"

The Montanian disappeared, and soon returned with the lad.

"What do you know of Newport?" demanded Dick.

"Know et all."

"Where do you think Stinson and his companion would be likely to put up?"

The gamin reflected a moment.

"Well," he said, "I can't just say the exact spot, but I shouldn't be s'prised ef I c'd find 'em."

"All right, There we go."

All forthwith left the Ashbrook, and Pepper hailed a cab that would take them to Newport.

The distance is short, and ere long they drew up before Herman's Hotel.

"You go on to Farmer's Hotel," Pepper said, "and wait there. If I don't find out nothin' here I'll j'ine ye. If I do I'll send a kid I know. Yer can shake the hack when ye git there, fer mebbe we will hev to look all over Newport for 'em, an' thar's lots of walkin' room layin' round loose here."

When the hack wheeled away there was a queer expression on the countenance of the man from Butte.

"Say, that boy's a corker, ain't he?"

"I thought you were of a different opinion," Dick observed.

"I was, at first. His cheek ruther made me howl, 'cause, ye know, I hev't been uster that sort o' thing, and et kinder knocked me at first. But the kid has got a head on 'im, no mistake, and I ruther begin to cotton to 'im. The more I think o' et, it strikes me I know suthin' more about his pedigree than he knows hisself."

"Well, that would be welcome news to the lad, I presume."

"How old d'ye allow he is?"

"Fifteen, I should say."

"Then thet orter fetch et. Wait! Let me conglomerate."

The Bull-dog evidently meant deliberate.

"It was 'bout long enough ago ter give a birth when Paul Pepper struck our camp," he said, "and one night when he was rolled up in er blanket, nigh on ter me, I heerd him tell a story about leavin his wife an' baby he called Petey. It comes back ter me now as kinder queer, for he was sound asleep, an' I was awake and takin' et all in."

There was no time for further conversation; they were at Farmer's, and there the hack was dismissed. Then they adjourned to the reading-room to wait for Peter Pepper.

But Peter was not forthcoming for some time. It was fully two hours ere he put in an appearance, and then it was with a wry expression of countenance.

"Can't find 'em," he announced. "Hunted all over, but nobody 'pears to hev seen 'em down around Herman's."

"Well, in that case, I don't know hardly what to do," Dick said. "It seems rather strange to me that they did not send me notice where to find them. However, we will wait awhile. It may be a plan to throw us off the trail. I think, Pepper, you had better go and look around a little longer. You might stumble onto them, ere you know it, or if not them, you might hit the original prey."

"Reckon I'll need some money, boss. I've got an idear, but it is too far to walk to git it," Pepper said.

"All right. How much do you think you will need?"

"Not over fifty cents."

"All right. Here it is."

The bootblack took it and started.

"Honest boy, that," the Bull-dog observed, sarcastically.

"Why not?"

"D'ye see that devil's gleam in his eye when he asked ye for that money?"

"No."

"Well, you kin jest bet it war thar, an' I allow I seen et!"

Dick thought a moment, and then said:

"May be I'd ought to foller the kid. Blame me if I don't, just for curiosity's sake."

And he bolted off in pursuit of his assistant.

CHAPTER XII.

THE BOOTBLACK'S RETURN.

THE scene changes. It is three weeks later, and three men and a boy are standing on the river landing at Newport, Ky.

They are the Bull-dog, Mr. Clincher, Sr., and a Cincinnati detective, named Hollis; also Pete Pepper.

When we last mentioned Deadwood Dick, he was about to set out in pursuit of Peter, whom he suspected of being "off color."

The Bull-dog over

tience as was at his command, but in vain. Dick did not return, nor did Peter, and careful research failed to discover anything of Messrs. Stinson and Blackman's whereabouts.

Now, the Bull-dog admired his new friend, Bristol, with the strong emphasis that characterizes the natures of most Western men, and he left no stone unturned to discover his whereabouts; but, not a trace of Dick, Pepper, Stinson or Blackman could be secure.

At Police Headquarters in Cincinnati, nothing had been heard from the local detectives.

So, after waiting at the Farmer's in Newport for two weeks, and dividing his time between there and the Herman, the Bull-dog returned to his father's house, in Cincinnati, and there remained, father and son anxiously hoping for developments.

But, hours slipped into days, and days into a week, and it was the beginning of a new week, ere any word came from the missing ones.

It came in the shape of a ring at the door of the Clincher mansion, at Mount Auburn.

The Bull-dog answered the bell.

And there stood Peter Pepper!

"Well, what d'ye want?" Bull-dog growled.

"Wanter speak wid ye, or yer dad," was the response. "Reckon yer dad would be best, fer may be he would be less cranky wid me than you are."

And actual tears came to the bootblack's eyes—who can say but they were the first that had ever dimmed them?

He looked completely fagged out, and if there was any sensitiveness in his nature he must have felt hurt. The Bull-dog probably realized this, for he seized the boy's hand, and said:

"Forgive me, an' waltz right in! I'm rough in my ways, an' I allow you're no slouch o' a squib, or ye wouldn't ha' come back here with news, an' ef my think aire correct, that's what you're here for."

"Couldn't guessed straighter," Peter averred, and was then conducted into the parlor.

Old Jabez had sufficiently recovered to be about the house, but had not yet been down to 'Change, as his financial affairs were in trustworthy hands. He was now seated in an easy-chair, looking very grave.

"This is Pepper, the bootblack," announced the Bull-dog. "He sez he's got news!"

Jabez Clincher eyed the bootblack in doubt.

"Well, what is your news?" he demanded.

"Don't come here with no lies, for they won't work."

"I hain't got no lies to tell ye," Pepper declared. "If I had, I'm too weak to tell 'em. For sake o' my love fer that gallus chap, Deadwood Dick, mister, I've come all ther way back, an' been widout anythin' to eat for forty-eight hours, 'Sides that, I've spent all the money I'd saved up, a-blackin' boots."

"If you don't mind givin' me a bite o' grub I'll feel like talkin' 'tween bites. I'll tell ye the one thing as mebbe you'll 'preciate even from a bootblack. Yer gal is still 'live an' kickin'. Won't say 'nuther word till I git sum chuck; then yer shall know all."

Then poor Pepper sunk back in his chair, closed his eyes, and actually relapsed into unconsciousness.

"He's cl'ar kerflunk!" the Bull-dog ejaculated, and forthwith bolted from the room, while old Clincher knelt in front of the chair he had just been occupying, and offered up a silent, but fervent prayer.

The Bull-dog soon darted back with a brandy-bottle, and poured a little of it down the bootblack's throat.

"Dad," he said, turning to Clincher, Sr., "this kid's a jim-dandy."

Mr. Clincher had just arisen from his knees, with tears in his eyes.

"Sonny," he said, "them's the first real tears I've shed sence yer mother died, but ef what the boy sez be true he'll never hev to work ag'in while I live!"

"Bully fer you, dad! an' after you've turned up yer toes I'll see he won't want for nothin' Ah! he's comin' to. The brandy hes fixed him!"

"Then go order the cook an' darter ter get the best fodder ther' is in the house, and have et got here quicker'n lightnin'. I'll bet the boy kin eat a shoat all by himself. Poor feller!" and old Clincher knelt, and chafed the bootblack's hand, while tears coursed down his furrowed cheeks. "Ter think he'd a-done all o' this fer me! He's one o' ther old stock, an' no mistake about thet. Poor boy! I never was much fer charity, but this ar' the sort as desarves et, an' he'll get et, ef I hev ter part wi' every hog I've got at the yards."

Peter soon came back into the realms of consciousness with a gasp, and stared around him.

"Where am I?" he demanded; then, esp'ying Clincher, he put his hand to his head. "Oh, I know. I am at old Clincher's. Yes, I come d'rect heer from the ferry. Guess I fell asleep, eh, boss?"

"You fainted, my boy," Clincher replied huskily.

"Oh! that's it. Felt kinder faintish 'fore I got here, and had to hug a lamp-post. Did I tell ye yer gal was all right?"

"You did."

"Then, will you let me lay down on that sofa a minute till my head gits clearer? Dunno what ails me. I feel as if I'd been drinkin', but I hain't."

Old Clincher averted his face to conceal a smile, for he knew what the matter was.

In his haste the Bull-dog had put too much of the rich old brandy down the bootblack's throat. No wonder Pepper thought he had been "boozing."

He lay on the sofa a while scratching away at his head; then he sat up.

"I feel better now," he said, "'cept I'm hungry. But you kin kick me from here clear over the Rhine if I know where I got the jag."

This was too much for Clincher. He could enjoy a good joke as well as the next one. He had kept a sober face half afraid the brandy would do more harm than good; but now he could hold in no longer, and roared with laughter.

"What ye laffin' at?" Peter demanded.

"Sonny," the hog magnate said, "while ye was in a faint you needed su'thin' ter brace you out o' it, an' so my son he chucked some sperits down you, and I reckon he over-estimated your capacity, an' give yer too much!"

Just then the Bull-dog re-entered.

"Yer supper will be heer in a jiffy, my lad," he announced, "and after you've hed yer fodder, we'll wanter hear yer adventures. But in ther mean time, will ye answer two questions?"

"Reckon I kin do that."

"Where is my friend, Deadwood Dick?"

"Same's yer sister—a prisoner."

"And the other two detectives—Stinson and Blackman?"

"Stinsterson he tuck sick at Louisville, an' last we heerd o' Blackman, he had gone on a false scent way off to Little Rock. We, by luck, struck a different trail, an' we follered et night an' day. That's why I'm so played out. At last we were s'prised, an' Dick was knocked silly and captured. I slid fer heer, fer money, grub, an' reinforcements. You two chaps hev got ter pull on yer travelin'-caps, and go 'long wid me."

"Where?"

"Tennessee. In de mount'ins."

"You will not be able to start to-night?"

"Muchly not. I must have rest. After supper, I skin fur hum. To morrow mornin' you'll find me ready fer work ag'in."

Supper was served and Pepper gorged himself; then, equipped with money, he departed, which brings us up to the opening line of this chapter.

While eating, we may add, the boy had told the Clinchers of his adventures.

"When I went off in s'arch o' Stinson and Blackman," he said, "I was not long in diskiverin' that I was bein' follered by Deadwood Dick. I reckoned he were suspicious o' me, but I kept right on; but he still dogged me. Byme-by, he see I was all right, and jined me an' we continued the search together."

"We found Stinson and Blackman at the Newport river front, an' they were waitin' fer a down-river steamer. They stated thet Moore an' King had taken a boat ahead of us an' had purchased tickets for Cairo, Iller-nois."

"So, when ther boat came erlong, we all took passage. The blokes must 'a' hed a chap a watchin', ter put ther coves on guard, fer when we got ter Cairo, we found thet the two hed fled down to Arkansas, or had slid up stream inter Tenne see."

"Stinson took sick, and Blackman, who thought the game had gone to Little Rock, sed he'd go thar. Dick tried ter argue wid him, but he wouldn't hev it, an' so Dick told him to go ahead ef he wanted to."

"He waited, along wid me, in Cairo, fer two days, afore we got any news; then he found out from a gambler as he had spotted as one of King's chums, that King and Moore had gone back on their tracks and made a run up into Tennessee beyond Nashville, gittin' off at a place called Fosterville, whar they would meet some confederates an' go up to a place they had in the hills."

"That was nuts fer us, so away we went for Fosterville, about four days behind the game, but the scent was hot an' Dick kept it, I tell you!"

"When we arruv at Fosterville, Dick he soon learned all about the lay ov the land, an' which way the trail into the bill led. So we got hosses an' started and rode a hull day, when we stopped with a planter named Parsons, fur the night. From him Dick got a heap o' news about a place up in the hills whar King and Moore often went, for Parsons had kept them over night often. This rendyvous was kept by old Zep King, who Dick believed was the gambler's father, an' a hard old nut he was, accordin' to Parsons's say."

"Well, in the mornin' Dick left me with the planter, an' takin' his bearin's, as he called it, said he would go and reconnoiter."

"He didn't come back till near night, an' then he was as white as plaster-paris. He called me aside, an' he sez to me: 'I'm wounded, but not seriously. They know we are on their track, and are surrounded by a big gang of men who will stand by 'em. Ther's not enuff people around heer to help us. I'm goin' back on watch duty to see they don't escape. If I see they go to sleep, I'll be back by daybreak. Ef I'm not back then, you'll off for Cincinnati, an' fetch the Bull-dog back with reinforcements. I will most likely have been captured, or maybe killed. Tell old Clincher his daughter is still alive. Tell the Bull-dog to bring men as ain't afraid to fight, and don't let the grass grow under your feet, if I'm not back."

"And I didn't, you can bet your boots! I came back as quick as railroads could bring me, and now you know all I know. A gang o' men must go ter her rescue."

This was the sum and substance of the revelation made by the bootblack to the Clinchers before he left "fer hum."

CHAPTER XIII.

OFF FOR TENNESSEE.

BUT to proceed:

The party on the Newport river-front were not waiting for a boat at the arrival of one

with reinforcements, prior to their departure for Tennessee.

When the Bull-dog returned from Cincinnati, he had been accompanied by six sturdy fellows of his own type.

Mr. Clincher was in excellent spirits over the probable recovery of his daughter, but anxious about the safety of Deadwood Dick.

Peter Pepper had had a solid night's rest, a change of raiment, and was feeling like a fighting-cock.

The Bull-dog, enveloped in a huge ulster overcoat, strode to and fro restlessly.

"I do wish we could be movin'!" he growled; but in a little while he cried: "Hurra! thar comes ther boyees!"

A little steamer was just nosing in, and the Bull-dog espied some of his men—the "Bully Boys from Butte," as he denominat-ed them.

As soon as they landed, the party set out for the nearest restaurant and had a "feed," for the hour being so early, none of them had yet breakfasted.

While they ate it was discussed which was the nearest way to reach a point, where young Pepper averred he could take the part of scout and lead the party to Planter Parsons's, and the planter would guide them into the mountains.

"Well, I reckon we'd better take to the cars at once. The Central aire the highest route I know of. Et runs straight for Chattanooga. Bin over et myself, after hogs."

Old Clincher had not come short-handed for money, and the whole party were soon on the Southern Express, speeding along at the rate of thirty miles an hour, en route for Fosterville, which was reached that evening at dusk.

It was now night, and although young Pepper was eager for starting for the adjacent hills where he supposed his much beloved Deadwood Dick was a prisoner, Mr. Clincher, who was weak and tired, objected.

So the party put up at the best tavern the village afforded.

But between the Bull-dog and Pepper there was an understanding, and that understanding was to the effect that they were to make a nocturnal trip to the Parsons plantation.

So, after supper the two ordered their horses of a livery man, and set off.

The bootblack took the lead, but with remarkable cleverness, and in the course of a few hours they reached the house of Parsons.

Parsons, who was a strapping, big-hearted fellow, welcomed Peter, cheerily, and likewise, William Clincher.

"Well, what's the news?" Peter asked. "Heard anything from my chum?"

"Nothing!" Parsons replied. "I'm 'fraid et is all up with him. It was a tough gang as hung out at old Zeb King's. Zeb runs an unlicensed still, and has a good bit of money put by, they say. Of course I do not meddle, fer I'm the only farmer within ten miles o' heer, and don't dare interfere, for if I did, I'd wake up some mornin', and find myself dead, or my buildin's all afire."

"I took a skirmish up that way, last night, tho', fer I felt consarned about yer friend. But, old Zeb's cabin war dark, and there was no stir about. I didn't dare venture too near, for if I'd been caught, et would bin death to me, an' my family, too."

"What time war ye up thar?" asked the Bull-dog.

"Not long after dark."

"Do they generally go to bed so early as that?"

"Not generally. The men who hang out in the hills, know old Zeb's as an all-night house. His whisky costs him little, an' he gives big measure, an' draws considerable trade."

"D'ye think there war any purtickler cause fer his place bein' dark, when ye were there?" Charley asked.

"Well, I had a suspicion, but I didn't feel safe in attempting to verify it."

"You had an idea they had taken a skip?"
 "Yes. Old Zeb is a sly old shark, and yet an unmitigated coward. He covets the dollar, mightily, and as his son Cap has some sugar, nothin' is more probable than that the old man should covet some of that. In case that Moore and King made it an object to old Zeb to assist them, he'd be just the man to do it, for he has about as many scruples to deter him, as a tiger would have."

"Will you guide us to the cabin in the hills?" the Bull-dog asked. "If ye will, I'll pay you well."

"If you will wait a few minutes, my son will be here, an' he'll go with ye. He's more used to night skylarkin', than I am, an' ain't afeard of nothin'!"

So they waited.

Bob Parsons soon put in an appearance.

He was a typical Tennessean—long, lank and lean, and yet quick of movement.

He was introduced to the Bull-dog and Pepper, and then his father said:

"Well, Bob, these fellers want a guide. D'ye want ter make a little pin-money?"

"What's the tariff?" Bob asked.

"I'll give you ten dollars!" the Bull-dog announced.

"Huh! that's a lot o' money. Where d'ye want go?"

"To the cabin of old Zeb King."

Mr. Parsons, Jr., shrugged his shoulders.

"Ten dollars wouldn't be much temptation fer me to enter *that* den," he declared.

"There's a tough gang holds out there, and ef ye know when yer hide is safe, you'll steer clear o' *there*!"

"You don't need go no nearer the place than to point it out to us," Clincher said. "For that service I will pay you what I offered you."

"Well, under the circumstances, I reckon I will take the job. I'll go for the hosses."

Bob soon came with the horses, and the trio at once mounted.

"Now be careful an' keep shady, son," the elder Parsons cautioned. "Et won't do fer you to be caught prowlin' around, ye know."

"I know that, dad. I'll keep to cover as much as I can," was the reply. "I'll be back all right, you can bet."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE LAND OF SILENCE.

THE moon had not yet risen when the trio left the planter's house. The stars were out in myriads, however, and served to dispel utter darkness from this land of silence and solitude.

Bob Parsons took the lead—the man from Butte and Peter Pepper close at his heels.

The way lay across a rolling stretch of country, unfenced, and for the most part uncultivated. In many places it was marshy, and much of the time the riders were obliged to follow their guide in single file.

At length they began to ascend a range of hills studded with timber that fire had blasted—towering pines and spectral beeches, the former looking like giants of some antediluvian period, and the latter like white-clad specters hovering about them.

The hilly country was not exactly what could be called mountainous, but was rugged and rocky, and scant of vegetation except the gaunt sentinels—the trees.

It was indeed a land of silence, for no sounds were to be heard, barring the horses' feet as they crunched over rock and gravel.

Not a night-bird's cry, nor even the hoot of an owl broke the monotony.

"I wouldn't live in these parts ef they'd give me ther best farm' around here," the Bull-dog averred.

"Why not, Bull-dog?" Mr. Pepper demanded, with a grin. "Ain't gittin' skeart, be ye?"

"Skeart! Well, no. Et would take more country than's layin' loose 'round hyer to

skeer me, an' don't ye fergit *that*! But et's so infernally quiet an' lonesome. Why, even in the wu'st solitudes o' the West ther's allus su'thin' stirrin', ter make a feller remember the world is still alive an' kickin'. Out thar a feller is likely to run across a wolf, a red-skin, a b'ar, or now an' then a rattlesnake. But heer, thar's nothin'! Even the bushes don't move, but stand still as if petrified, an' the moon acts like it had gone on a strike. Darn me, ef this ain't a dandy place for spooks ter hold their political caucusses!"

"These hills are what Tennesseans call the Land o' Silence," Bob Parsons observed, looking back over his shoulder. "Since the fire over here a few years ago, no bird, fowl, insect or animal has been known to abide around this immeget locality."

"Bully fer them!" ejaculated Clincher, with emphasis. "They've at least got hoss sense."

They toiled on and upward.

At last they came to a tiny rivulet, where the horses were allowed to slake their thirst.

"By cracky! that is at least one cheerin' sight," the Bull-dog remarked. "I didn't know but even the water had taken a march."

"Oh, you'll find it better further on," Bob said.

"Lordy! I hope so. I shall jest git off my hoss and howl ef things git any wuss."

"Reckon this wouldn't be much of a place fer shinin' boots!" the boot artist suggested.

"If we should run across some o' Zeb King's men, you'd find plenty o' polishin' to attend to."

An hour more of toilsome climbing brought them into a live forest of beech and hemlocks and the Bull-dog drew a breath of unmistakable relief.

"Ah! this is more like it," he said. "How fur we got to go yet?"

"Not far. Look to your weepens, and be ready to use 'em, if we should be surprised. The chaps who hang out here are hard citizens, and ain't very pertic'ler to havin' strangers nosin' around, and they don't know no more about the rules of ettiket than a nigger knows about dickshunary."

"That's good. I'm never so much at hum in the front parlor as when I can set my revolvers barkin' out opery music, and howlin the chorus!" the Bull-dog asseverated.

"How are you fixed for weapons, both of you?" Parsons demanded, with evident uneasiness.

"I've got two revolvers as will give a chap the palpitation o' the heart the minute he sees 'em!" Clincher announced.

"And you, Pepper?"

"I haven't any."

"That's bad. Well, here, take one of mine. I've got my Winchester rifle, and that's good for fourteen shots in case of a fight. I've also one revolver. Now, remember; if we're attacked, shoot, and shoot to lay out your man. If you don't, we'll git laid out ourselves. These fellers up here are very devils when it comes to a fight."

"Do you think we'll really hev ter fight 'em?"

It was the Bull-dog who asked this.

"That depends," Parsons replied. "If old Zeb has shut up shop for a time, we probably won't have any trouble. If he ain't, and he knows that detectives are prowlin' around, look out! most likely you were spotted the minute you landed in Rockwood. In that case, communication has reached the gang ere this, and we are liable to run into a hornets' nest at any moment!"

"That's purty good logic!" the Bull-dog admitted. "Well, go ahead. If there's ter be music, I kin howl a solo in ther real Butte City style uv art."

This conversation had taken place at the edge of the forest, where a brief halt had been made. The forest was dense; and therefore dark, the branches meeting in a confused mass, overhead.

"Think you can find your way?" the Bull-dog asked, anxiously.

"Oh! yes. I've been in these woods before. But, we shall have to dismount, and leave our horses, here."

All dismounted, and the horses were tied to the trees.

"S'pose we come back, an' find the hosses gone?" suggested Peter. "Should we have to frog it back to your dad's?"

"Reckon we would, sonny."

Peter had no relish for a mishap of this sort, but he said nothing more. Presumably he wished himself back in Porkopolis with his blacking kit under his arm.

They now advanced into the forest, which was gruesomely lonely and silent.

Bob Parsons picked his way with the skill of an experienced woodsman, and Clincher and Pete kept close behind him, for neither was willing to get lost in that dismal locality.

After a tramp of half an hour, they came to the edge of a glade, or clearing into which the just rising moon now cast a faint light.

Here the trio halted.

"Ther's Zeb's cabin," Parsons whispered, pointing to a dimly-visible, long structure of logs, set down in the center of the clearing, a space covering, mayhap, ten acres.

No light was visible about the place, nor, was there any perceptible sign of life.

"Yes, thet's Zeb's," Parsons continued, "an' they say there's been more blood spilt in that den than in any other shebang in the State. There's another buildin', further on. That's his illicit whisky still. I reckon there ain't no one tew home!"

"Don't look like!" Clincher replied.

"Howsomedever, there's no sayin'. You can't tell how fur a kangaroo kin jump by the length of his tail. You two remain here, til I come back. I'm goin' ter reconnoiter."

"Be carefull!" Parsons cautioned.

"I'm takin' the chances," was the reply.

"Don't fret yourselves 'til ye heer this canine howl; then you'll know the Butte City Brass Band has begun to toot!"

CHAPTER XV.

TO THE RESCUE.

THE opening in which Zeb King's cabin was located was so overgrown with bushes and weeds that the Bull-dog foresaw a safe cover to the cabin.

If there *was* an ambush in the grim old cabin, he would be able to approach near, if not quite to the structure, without discovery.

With the stealth of a cat the man from Montana crept forward, pausing now and then to listen.

In the edge of the timber Parsons and Pete were also on the alert, half expecting to soon hear sounds of a fracas in the direction of the cabin.

But they were agreeably disappointed, for in less than an hour the Bull-dog came back.

"Well, what's ther news?" both Parsons and Pete asked in a breath.

"Not much," was the grim answer. "The shebang is locked up, and the lock is on the outside o' the door."

"I was afraid of that. They've skedad-dled, jest as my old man prophesied," Parsons declared.

"I'm not so sure o' that. I can read signs ekal ter any Injun, an' I found tracks about the door as weren't made more'n a couple o' hours ago, an' I'll swar to et."

"Hum! Which way did they lead?"

"Off yander," and he indicated the direction with his forefinger.

Parsons reflected.

"That's in the direction of the distillery," he said. "There is a bare possibility that old Zeb may be there, engaged in running his still, but I doubt it. Even if he is, it ain't likely he'd have the captives in the cabin without a guard."

"Dunno! He's taken care ter padlock the door, on the outside."

"Well, what's to be done?"

"First, answer me a question. Has old Zeb got a wife?"

"No. She's dead, years ago."

"Good! There's no danger, then. What we must do, is ter waltz right over ter that cabin, force an entrance through one o' the windows, and have a look around."

"Dangerous!" Parsons said, with a shake of his head.

"Mebbe it is, but we aire armed, and if wu'st comes to wu'st we can fight. We can't 'ford to go away from here 'thout havin' a look at the insides o' that aire cabin," knowing "just what *isn't* thar."

"Well, go ahead and we'll follow."

The Bull-dog led off, Parsons and Pepper following him, and in due time the cabin was reached, having been approached from the rear.

There was but one window on this side. This soon yielded to the combined efforts of the two men to raise it and the trio were soon inside.

It was very dark, but the Montanan struck a match, and soon found a tallow candle, by which they were enabled to see their surroundings.

This cabin of Zeb King, unlike most log cabins, was divided off into several compartments, the largest one of which was the bar-room, a dirty, foul-smelling place with a rough counter, and a shelf behind it containing a few whisky bottles and glasses.

Leaving Pepper at the cabin door, to give an alarm, in case old Zeb or his colleagues were heard returning, the two men proceeded to investigate the place. The first room examined, after the bar-room, was a bedroom—evidently where old Zeb had slept, judging by the disordered state of things.

The next was a sort of combined kitchen and store-room; at the last room they came to, it was discovered that the door was locked, with a padlock.

"By Jingo! I'll bet my boots we've struck somethin', at last!"

So, he pounded on the door, and cried.

"Hello! any one in there?"

"Who is it?" a faint voice replied.

"Et's Bill Clincher, the howling Bull-dog from Butte City, Montana, an' a friend o' his'n"

"Thank God! I am Clara Clincher and am a prisoner here. For God's sake release me!"

"You bet we will! Jest hold yer hosses for a few minutes, and we'll have you out in great shape."

They soon found an ax, with which the fastenings of the door were demolished, and, a moment later, William Clincher and his sister Clara were clasped in each other's embrace.

Clara was a comely looking little woman, though her pallid features bespoke privation and suffering.

"Oh! William," she cried, "I am so glad—so glad. I thought you were dead!"

"And that's what we've been thinkin' about you, Clara! Where's yer babby—yer boy?"

"Why, he has been dead quite a while,"

"Then thet cuss, Moore, was tryin' to palm off some other kid onto my old man, sayin' thet the kid was yourn, and you were dead. He didn't succeed, however. Where is Moore and the rest of the gang, now?"

"I don't know—maybe at old Zeb's still. Oh! let's hurry and get away from this awful place, where I have been a prisoner so long! If old Zeb and the gang should come back, and find you here, all would be lost."

"There'd be likely to be some blood lost. I'll agree to that!" the Bull-dog declared, grimly. "But, there's another matter to attend to before we leave heer. D'ye know

whether there is another prisoner about the premises—a detective?"

"Some one is confined in the cellar for I've heard him groan, but I don't know who it is."

"It's the detective, I'll bet my boots!" the Bull-dog ejaculated. "You stay here with Parsons, sis, an' I'll go and investigate."

And, lighting another candle, he set about hunting the way to the cellar.

He was not long in finding it—a trap door in the floor, behind the bar. Lifting this he clambered down a steep flight of stairs into the cellar, which was long, narrow and deep, and was littered with barrels, boxes, and rubbish. The walls were for the most part solid rock, and this was of soft limestone formation.

After a brief search, Clincher came to where a dungeon had been chipped out of the rock, and the entrance to this was guarded by a stout oaken door, which was barred on the outside.

Removing the bars, the Bull-dog threw the door wide open, and flashed his light into the rock room. Then he sprung forward, with a cry of exultation, for there, lying upon a bed of dry weeds and leaves, was indeed Deadwood Dick!

He was pale and considerably emaciated, and his beard had grown a couple of inches long.

He arose, feebly, when he saw the Bull-dog, and extended his hand.

"I am glad you have come," he said. "I was just wondering if I were ever to get out of this den alive. Have you found your sister, yet?"

"Yes, and set her at liberty. Have you been sick?"

"Yes. I came near peggin' out from exposure, and a wound I got. But, I'm gettin' stronger, now. So the bootblack came back to Cincinnati and told you, eh?"

"Yes. He's a brick!"

"You're right; he is. Where's the gang?"

"Give it up. The shebang was locked up when we came. I suspect they're at old Zeb's still. Anyhow, the sooner we get away from here, the better."

"I guess you are right. But, after I'm stronger I don't mean to leave here 'til I've jugged every one of the gang, or 'laid 'em out!"

They left the cellar, and went up-stairs, Dick making the ascent with difficulty.

Here he was presented to Clara.

"Sis, this is Deadwood Dick, the detective, who hunted ye out, an' nigh got the gizzard blowed out o' him, a-tryin' ter rescue you!" the Bull-dog announced. "He's a Jim-dandy, you bet! and if it hadn't been for him, you'd 'a' never been found!"

Just then, the bootblack was heard shouting from the bar-room.

"Hyer they come, like a pack o' howlin' hyenas. We've been diskivered, and ther enemy aire goin' to warm our jackets!"

CHAPTER XVI.

IN A TIGHT PLACE—PEPPER'S HEROISM.

THE startling cry of Peter Pepper caused the others to rush for the bar-room, in great haste.

Peter had already closed and bolted the strong wooden shutters, and barred the door on the inside with the heavy oaken bars, designed for that purpose.

"Now, then, you go close t'other shutters, and bolt 'em good!" he ordered of Bob Parsons, with authority of one born to command, and Bob hastened to obey.

Meanwhile, Dick and the Bull-dog were peering through loop-holes, several of which perforated the sides of the cabin.

Coming across the glade were full twenty men, all brandishing torches and yelling and gesticulating like a pack of Comanches on the war-path.

That they had discovered the presence of

their enemies in the mountain tavern, seemed more than probable.

Dick turned to Pepper, and said:

"These fellers haven't got rifles. Have you discovered any guns about the place?"

Pepper nodded: "The closet yonder, is full of 'em," he said, "an' all of 'em aire loaded repeaters."

"Fetch 'em out!" Dick ordered, "and don't be slow about it. One shot may temporarily check the cusses, but ef we let 'em git near the cabin, they'll make it warm for us."

Peter at once brought forth two loaded Winchester repeating rifles, and gave one each to Dick and the Bull-dog.

He then provided himself with one, and thus the whole party were equipped, Parsons having his own weapon.

"Now, then," Dick said, to Clincher, "when I say 'Go!' pick out your man, and drop him. It's our only chance for salvation."

Both men took aim through the loop-holes, and, at the signal, fired.

Two of the leaders fell, when the party came to a halt and held a few seconds' consultation, and then picking up their comrades, they retreated out of range of bullets, and held a protracted confab, evidently.

"They are indulging in a council of war," Dick decided. "They feel rather doubtful. If you were tracked here from Rockwood, they may fear you've got more men with you than they'd care to tackle."

"They fear nothing, them chaps don't," declared Bob Parsons. "I know 'em of old, and they're as fearless a lot as ever smelt powder. They're figgerin' to see how they can get at us with the least danger to themselves. We must keep watch of their every movement or we will get left, sure."

The consultation of the roughs lasted for several minutes, and, although those in the house could not hear what was said, they knew by the excitement and cries of vengeance, that hot work was coming.

"I wonder if Moore and Cap King are among the gang?" Dick asked.

"If they are, I reckon they will take jolly good care to keep as far in the rear as possible," the Bull-dog replied. "They both know that I've got in for 'em, and they don't care to hear me howl!"

It soon became evident that the gang meant to approach the cabin in four sections, and on four sides, and begin the siege, simultaneously.

"We shall have to each one of us take a side," Dick thereupon announced, "and fight for our lives. No mercy is to be shown us. Petey, do you think you can hold one end of the building?"

"Shouldn't wonder ef I could, boss. Leastwise, I kin try. Never hed much experience shutin' men, but I've shot a good bit in shutin' galleries, so I understand how to pull trigger."

"Good. You go to the south end o' the cabin, you, Bull-dog to the rear, and Parsons to the north. I'll look after the front. Don't let the cusses get nearer the cabin than you can help!"

Then the detective took another peep through the loop-hole.

"Bad luck to us!" he muttered.

"What's the matter?" demanded Parsons.

"Why, the devils have got a reinforcement of ten men!"

"And are likely to have fifty more!" the Bull-dog added.

"Ah! why so?"

"'Cause there's a little settlement, beyond that belt o' timber, an' the land an' most o' ther houses are mortgaged to old Zeb King. So when he calls, the settlers are bound ter cum ter time, ye see."

"If you will give me a rifle," Clara said. "I will help Peter defend the southern end. I know how to handle a rifle, better than you may suppose."

"Very well," Dick replied. "Every hand helps, in a case like this."

He then procured her the rifle, and she took it with the coolness of a veteran, and advanced to join Peter Pepper.

Every one was in place now, and ready for the fray, and the siege that promised to follow.

The gang separated. The men who would fight the front, remained stationary. The others, in either direction, entered the woods, which flanked the clearing, or glade.

"Keep a sharp outlook," Dick ordered, "and tell me when you see a sign from the woods."

The first call was from Clara. She came to him, and tapped him on the shoulder.

"The moon is under a cloud," she said. "Do you think Peter could reach your horses?"

"Why do you ask?" Dick asked.

"Because we may be able to resist for a while, but cannot hold out forever. Peter wants to go. He says he can find the horses, and will ride like the wind down to the Parsons farm, have him arouse all the neighboring country, and then make a flight to Fosterville, and bring back papa and those who are with him, and as many more as he can get. We can probably hold out as long as the ammunition lasts, and by that time help may come."

"But, in that case, the southern end of the cabin will be left unguarded!"

"I'll attend to that, better than Peter could!" Clara assured. "I've passed through so much, since I was so unfortunate as to marry that scoundrel, Moore, that I absolutely fear nothing. My life and liberty are now in the balance, and I want to fight for it!"

"You are a brave woman!" Dick declared. "I admire you. Do you really think Pete means what he says?"

"He is eager to go. He is fond of you, and is willing to risk his life for all of us. He was afraid to approach you, lest you should refuse him. So I came."

"Send the lad here," Dick ordered.

Just then the report of a rifle reverberated through the building; it came from Peter's post.

Dick and Clara both rushed into his room and found the gamin grinning with delight.

"I've knocked over one chap!" he announced, "an' s'prised myself. They begun to come out o' the woods, over yonder, an' I took a header on the first chap, an' he took a tumble. The rest o' the blokes sneaked back under cover."

Dick took a look from the loop between the logs, but there was no movement on the border of the woodland.

"Are you sure you hit him?" Dick demanded.

"I am."

"And, now, how about this proposition of yours?"

"I want to go, boss. I'll ride like blazes. I'll take two horses, an' if kill one, I'll have another. You'll need help, an' if you kin hold out 'til I kin get back, or send it, you'll be all hunk. If we don't hev help we're goners."

The idea was not an unreasonable one.

"But, Peter, do you consider what you are risking—your life!" Dick asked earnestly.

"Oh! I'm willin' to run the chances. I can reach the horses, I reckon, by crawlin', an' once I git thar, no fear but I'm away. If the horses are gone, I'll foot it. I likes you all, I do, an' thar's four to one to be saved or go under. You men are able to take keer o' yourselves on a pinch, but this leddy must be rescued. I'd die to save her, ef I am only a bootblack. She kissed me, awhile ago, when I sed I'd go fer help, an' that's the only one as ever did that, as I kin remember. Mebbe my mammy did, but I

don't remember ever seein' her. Yes, I'll go!"

Tears had sprung to the eyes of both Clara and Deadwood Dick, and the latter had caught Peter to his breast affectionately.

"You are a noble boy," he said, huskily, "and I'll see that you shall reap a rich reward. You may go, and God be with you! I feel that you will pull through, and bring us aid. Surely, one of your undaunted courage, and honest, loving heart, can not fail!"

"My blessing be with you, Peter!" Clara said, kissing him upon the forehead.

Just then the Bull-dog entered.

"No signs, on my side!" he announced. "Hello! what in thunder is the difficulty heer? Any one hurt?"

"The matter is," Dick replied, "that this noble boy has just knocked over one of our enemies, and is now risking his life to go and get us help—not for the sake of us men, but for your sister's."

The Bull-dog stared at Pepper a few seconds, as if he could not believe the evidence of his senses; then, with one of those howls, so peculiar with him, and so hard to imitate, he sprung forward, grabbed Peter up in his arms as though he had been a child, and galloped around the room like one insane.

"Whoop! bow-wow! Hyer's a dorg fer ye, an' he's of good breed, you kin bet yer bottom doller! Ef ever I'm ther daddy o' a kid, his name shall be Pepper, fer Pepper is sharp!"

Then, standing Peter once more upon his feet, he added, more gently:

"Go et, boy! and ef ye succeed, an' I'll bet my ha'r you will, thar'll be more Clincher dollars in yer paw than you'll know what ter do with. What ther old man don't pay, I'll make up, an' don't ye forget it!"

"Well, that will be all right," Peter answered. "I want to get a move at once. Jest h'ist the back windy, an' I'll be off."

They adjourned to the kitchen; Peter shook hands with the party, and then, the shutters partly opened, the boy slipped out into the night.

Refastening the window, the party returned to their various posts, Clara Moore taking that vacated by young Pepper.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE APPROACH OF DAWN.

OCCASIONALLY, Dick would seek his companions, to learn if they had seen any sign of their enemy but they had not, except the Bull-dog, who vouchsafed the following:

"They war over ther', awhile ago," indicating the timber, opposite his post of observation, "but, after a while, they moved along the edge o' the timber, reg'lar red-skin fashion, an' from the best o' my judgement, they went back to whar the main party fu'st appeared. So, I reckon ef an attack is made at all, it will be on the front door. The ends an' back o' the shebang aire solid enuff, 'cept the windies, an' the shutters on them'll stand a pile o' thumpin', afore they'll weaken. So I reckons we two had better keep an eye on the front, and run back now an' then so as to make sure the rear is all O. K."

"Maybe you are right; but we must take good care not to get surprised in the rear, even though the front may need more attention. Hello!"

For the second time that night a shot sounded from the room occupied by Clara—a ringing rifle report, followed by a yell of agony, outside the cabin, and evidently not far away.

Clara was standing bravely at her post, showing no emotion, whatever, except a slight pallor in the cheeks, when Dick and the Bull-dog rushed into the room.

"Did you hit any one?" Dick demanded.

"Yes, and I'm afraid I've killed him. Oh! I should be so sorry if I have, for I would then be a murderess."

"Not at all. You were simply acting in self-defense, which is perfectly right and

justifiable. If those devils get in here, they will slaughter us all. But tell us about it."

"Well, I kept a sharp outlook, and I've been shut up in darkness so much since I've been here, that I can see pretty well in it. I saw the undergrowth swaying, out yonder. It struck me as kind of strange, for, on glancing at a bush near the loop-hole, I saw that not a leaf stirred."

"I then knew that some one was creeping toward the cabin, through the bushes and weeds. Presently a head popped up for an instant; my rifle was ready, and its report was followed by a yell!"

"Yes, an' jest listen to that!" howled the Bull-dog. "They're down on us, sure!"

It really seemed so, for just at this juncture, there was a chorus of unearthly yells, in front of the cabin!

Dick and the Bull-dog both leaped back into the bar-room, and peered through the loop-holes.

Full thirty desperate looking ruffians were swooping down toward the front door with drawn revolvers, and uttering discordant yells.

They were not ten yards away!

"Quick! let her go, Clincher! Here! Mrs. Moore—here Parsons! You're wanted, to help defend the front!"

Then the battle began, in dead earnest.

Bang! bang! bang!

Every second a jet of fire spouted from the loop-holes in the log walls, and a leaden messenger of death cut its way into the howling mob, who returned the fire, but, of course, harmlessly, for no bullet penetrated through the logs.

Still the ruffians came on, despite that deadly fire, and soon they were close up against the cabin walls, so that it was impossible to get a shot at them, except when one of them chanced to get in front of a loop-hole, when he was immediately picked off.

Full fifteen of the thirty had thus far succumbed to the Destroying Angels intrenched within those walls.

"Well, so far, we've not made so bad a showing," Dick said, grimly, "and ef they give us a chance, we will make it still more interesting for them, you bet!"

"They've ruther got us by the horns!" the Bull-dog replied. "They're huggin' the walls, close, like a pack o' bloody Turks, an' they're up to some mischief, you bet!"

Outside, the yelling had ceased, and utmost silence prevailed—a silence by no means a favorable symptom.

The candle in the bar-room had been extinguished, so that none of the enemy could peer in through the loop-holes, and get a chance shot, and in the bar-room was inky blackness.

Dick had removed his boots, and occasionally prowled around, from room to room, and listened by the windows, to make sure that no attempt was being made, to pry open the shutters.

But, all was quiet.

Dick had expected that a peremptory demand would be made for admission to the cabin, but none had been made.

What scheme were they hatching up, in order to get into the cabin?

That was the all-important question.

"Well, what d'yer make o' the silence?" the Bull-dog demanded, in a whisper.

"I am undecided what to think," Dick replied.

"Think they're hatchin' up some plot to surprise us?"

"Maybe—indeed, most probable."

"What do you suppose it is?"

"I have no particular idea. I feel certain of one thing, however. If they don't spring a trap on us inside of an hour, it will be day-break, and by that time Peter may bring or send us help!"

"By Jove! you're right. Et mus' be party near mornin'."

The hour passed without any demonstration from the roughs, and the first gray streaks of dawn began to appear in the East.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CONCLUSION.

THE breaking of day was a great relief to the party of hemmed-in friends.

Broad daylight came and still there was no sound or visible movement of the enemy. What they could be doing, or why they were so silent, was a mystery.

"I'm inclined to the opinion that they've reconsidered their hostile notion and sneaked off," Bob Parsons said.

"Don't you believe it!" Dick replied. "We shall hear from them before long!"

And he was not mistaken.

A few minutes later there came a thundering knock on the door!

"Hello, in thar!" cried a voice.

"Hello! yourself!" returned Dick. "What do you want?"

"I want to come in. Open thar door!"

"Can't accommodate you, for it's locked on the outside!"

"No et ain't. I've removed the lock."

"You have. Who the blazes are you?"

"Zeb King, what owns this place!"

"Get out. You're chaffing me."

"I'll cussed quick show ye ef I am or not, ef ye don't open that door! Open up, I say, or we'll break the door down, an' murder every one of ye!"

"Break away, Zebediah!" Dick coolly retorted. "Break away! Don't wait; but, remember there's enough of us to clean out your whole gang, and the first galoot that shoves his nose in here is a dead man."

There was no verbal reply, but the next instant there came a tremendous crash upon the door, that made it shake.

Fortunately, it was built of one piece of solid oak, mounted upon heavy hinges, and protected on the inside by heavy iron and oaken bars, two of each kind.

"The door won't stand that racket long!" the Bull-dog said, dubiously.

"I'm afraid not!" Dick assented. "The only thing we can do, is to stand ready to sell our lives dearly, when the door does go in, for it is impossible to get a shot at the devils, from any of the loop-holes."

"Yes, you bet we'll sell 'em dearly!" the Bull-dog gritted.

Again, a terrific crash, that caused the door to stagger, and give, perceptibly.

Bristol, Parsons and the Bull-dog, placed their rifles within reach, and then drew their revolvers.

A crisis was at hand.

Clara, who had all along borne herself with heroic courage, now raised her voice:

"Glory! glory!" she cried—she had been peering from one of the loops—"we are saved! Here comes help! A band of horse-men, and Peter Pepper, and another man is in the lead, and—oh! oh! oh! It's my father!"

Dick and the Bull-dog took a hasty glance through the log rifts, and found that Clara had spoken the truth.

A party consisting of old Clincher, Peter Pepper, the "Bully Boys" of the Man from Butte, and a dozen more horse-men, were bearing down upon the cabin, like a whirlwind, firing as they came.

The roughs who had been attacking the cabin-door with a battering-ram, uttered yells of terror, and fled in great consternation.

Old Zeb King, Cap King, and Ezra Moore, were among those who fell, never to rise, until the day of Resurrection.

The Land of Silence had never known such a sight before, for the gang that had long infested that region, and committed most daring and infamous crimes and atrocities, was completely destroyed.

A few words more.

It is unnecessary to add that the reunion was a most happy one all around.

The party soon set out for Planter Parsons's, where Dick, Pete, the Clinchers, and the "Bully Boys" were hospitably entertained for a couple of days, until they were thoroughly rested. Then, they returned to Fosterville, and set out for Cincinnati.

In due time they arrived at the home of the Clinchers, and here they had a grand spread in honor of the happy end of the Clincher Campaign.

Dick remained for several days, a guest of the Clinchers, and during that time received a most munificent reward for his services.

As for Peter Pepper, he, too, was rewarded in a handsome manner, but in addition, Jabez Clincher has adopted him, and as a preliminary to making a hog merchant of him, will give him a thorough education; while the Bull-dog for his own satisfaction proposes to work out the pedigree of the now happy Peter.

Just before Dick was about to bid farewell to the Clinchers, old Jabez received a communication from an old friend in St. Louis, which changed Dick's plans considerably.

It ran as follows:

"ST. LOUIS, Nov. 20.

"DEAR CLINCHER:—

"Ye writ me ye had engaged a smart detective, to look up yer darter. If so be he's bin successful, an' is at liberty, send him over here, for I'm in need o' the services of a detective, smart enough to show the Police boobies how to do biz."

"Your old friend.

"SIMEON SNIP."

So bidding adieu to his Cincinnati friends, Dick set out at once for St. Louis.

THE END.

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- 258 Sierra Sam's Seven; or, The Stolen Bride.
- 273 Jumbo Joe, the Boy Patrol; or, The Rival Heirs.
- 277 Denver Doll, the Detective Queen.
- 281 Denver Doll's Victory.
- 285 Denver Doll's Decey; or, Little Bill's Bonanza.
- 291 Turk, the Boy Ferret.
- 296 Denver Doll's Drift; or, The Road Queen.
- 299 A. J. J., the Dashing Toll-Taker.
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- 325 Kelley, Hickey & Co., the Detectives of Philadelphia.
- 330 Little Quick-Shot; or, The Dead Face of Daggersville.
- 334 Kangaroo Kit; or, The Mysterious Miner.
- 339 Kangaroo Kit's Racket.
- 343 Manhattan Mike, the Bowery Blood.
- 358 First-Class Fred, the Gent from Gopher.
- 368 Yreka Jim, the Gold-Gatherer; or, The Life Lottery.
- 372 Yreka Jim's Prize.
- 378 Nabob Ned; or, The Secret of Slab City.
- 382 Cool Kit, the King of Kids; or, A Villain's Vengeance.
- 385 Yreka Jim's Joker; or, The Rivals of Red Nose.
- 389 Bicycle Ben; or, The Lion of Lightning Lode.
- 394 Yreka Jim of Yuba Dam.
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- 416 High Hat Harry, the Base Ball Detective.
- 426 Sam Slabides, the Beggar-Boy Detective.
- 434 Jim Beak and Pal, Private Detectives.
- 438 Santa Fe Sal, the Slasher.
- 456 Sealskin Sam, the Sparkler.

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- 23 Nick o' the Night; or, The Boy Spy of '76.
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- 47 Nightingale Nat; or, The Forest Captains.
- 64 Dandy Jack; or, The Outlaws of the Oregon Trail.
- 82 Kit Harefoot, the Wood-Hawk.
- 94 Midnight Jack; or, The Boy Trapper.
- 106 Old Frosty, the Guide; or, The White Queen.
- 123 Klowa Charley, the White Mustang.
- 139 Judge Lynch, Jr.; or, The Boy Vigilante.
- 155 Gold Trigger, the Sport; or, The Girl Avenger.
- 169 Tornado Tom; or, Injun Jack From Red Core.
- 188 Ned Temple, the Border Boy.
- 198 Arkansas; or, The Queen of Fate's Revenge.
- 207 Navajo Nick, the Boy Gold Hunter.
- 215 Captain Bullett; or, Little Tonknot's Crusade.
- 231 Plucky Phil; or, Rosa, the Red Jezebel.
- 241 Bill Bravo; or, The Roughs of the Rockies.
- 255 Captain Apollo, the King-Plin of Bowie.
- 267 The Buckskin Detective.
- 279 Old Winch; or, The Buckskin Desperadoes.
- 294 Dynamite Dan; or, The Bowle Blade of Cochetopa.
- 302 The Mountain Detective; or, The Trigger Bar Bully.
- 316 Old Eclipse, Trump Card of Arizona.
- 326 The Ten Pardos; or, The Terror of Take-Notice.
- 336 Big Benson; or, The Queen of the Lasso.
- 345 Pitiless Matt; or, Red Thunderbolt's Secret.
- 356 Cool Sam and Pard; or, The Terrible Six.
- 366 Velvet Foot, the Indian Detective.
- 386 Captain Outlass; or, The Buccaneer's Girl Foe.
- 396 Rough Rob; or, The Twin Champions of Blue Blazes.
- 411 The Silken Lassie; or, The Rose of Ranch Robin.
- 418 Felix Fox, the Boy Spotter.
- 425 Texas Trump, the Border Rattler.
- 436 Phil Flash, the New York Fox.
- 445 The City Vampires; or, Red Rolfe's Pigeon.
- 461 One Against Fifty; or, The Last Man of Kent Bar.
- 470 The Boy Shadow; or, Felix Fox's Hunt.
- 477 The Excelsior Sport; or, The Washington Spotter.
- 499 Single Sight, the One-Eyed Sport.
- 502 Branded Ben, the Night Ferret.
- 512 Dodger Dick, the Wharf-Spy Detective.
- 521 Dodger Dick's Best Dodge.
- 528 Fox and Falcon, the Bowery Shadows.
- 538 Dodger Dick, the Dock Ferret.
- 543 Dodger Dick's Doublet; or, The Rival Boy Detectives.
- 553 Dodger Dick's Desperate Case.
- 563 Dodger Dick, the Boy Video.
- 573 The Two Shadows.
- 582 Dodger Dick's Drop.
- 594 Little Lon, the Street-Slinger Detective.
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- 685 Happy Hugh, the Boy Musician Detective.
- 701 Photograph Fred, the Camera Sharp.
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- 519 Captain Mystery; or, Five in One.
- 531 Daisy Dare, the Sport from Denver.
- 537 Old Bombshell, the Ranger Detective.
- 604 Iron Fern, the Man of Fire.
- 619 The Boy Trump Detective; or, The Double Grip Witness.
- 629 Violet Vane, the Velvet Sport.
- 641 Dismal Dave's Dandy Pard.
- 651 Bound Boy Frank, the Young Amateur Detective.
- 663 Violet Vane's Victory.
- 682 Wild Vulcan, the Lone-Range Rider.
- 694 Violet and Daisy, the Pony Pard.
- 705 Violet Vane's Vow; or, The Crafty Detective's Craft.
- 714 Old Misery, the Man from Missouri.
- 724 Violet Vane's Vengeance.

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- 7 The Flying Yankee; or, The Ocean Outcast.
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- 62 The Shadow Ship; or, The Rival Lieutenants.
- 75 The Boy Drellat; or, The Cruise of the Sea-Wolf.
- 102 Dick Dead-Eye, the Boy Smuggler.
- 111 The Sea-Devil; or, The Midshipman's Legacy.
- 116 The Hussar Captain; or, The Hermit of Hell Gate.
- 197 Little Grit; or, Bessie, the Stock-Tender's Daughter.
- 204 Gold Plume; or, Buffalo Bill, the Pony Express Rider.
- 216 Bison Bill, the Prince of the Plains; or, Buffalo Bill's Pluck.
- 222 Grit, the Bravo Sport; or, The Woman Trailer.
- 229 Crimson Kate; or, The Cowboy's Triumph.
- 237 Lone Star, the Cowboy Captain.
- 245 Merle, the Middy; or, The Freelance Heir.
- 250 The Midshipman Mutineer; or, Brandt, the Buccaneer.
- 264 The Floating Feather; or, Merle Monte's Treasure.
- 269 The Gold Ship; or, Merle, the Condemned.
- 276 Merle Monte's Cruise; or, "The Gold Ship" Chase.
- 280 Merle Monte's Fate; or, Pearl, the Pirate's Bride.
- 284 The Sea Marauder; or, Merle Monte's Pledge.
- 287 Billy Blue-Eyes, the Boy Rover of the Rio Grande.
- 304 The Dead Shot Dandy; or, Benito, the Boy Bugler.
- 308 Keno Kit; or, Dead Shot Dandy's Double.
- 314 The Mysterious Marauder; or, The Boy Bugler's Trail.
- 377 Bonodel, the Boy Rover; or, The Flagless Schooner.
- 383 The Indian Pilot; or, The Search for Pirate Island.
- 387 Warpath Will, the Boy Phantom.
- 398 Seawall, the Boy Lieutenant.
- 402 Isador, the Young Conspirator; or, The Fatal League.
- 407 The Boy Insurgent; or, The Cuban Vendetta.
- 412 The Wild Yachtsman; or, The War-Cloud's Cruise.
- 429 Duncan Dare, the Boy Refugee.
- 433 A Cabin Boy's Luck; or, The Corsair.
- 437 The Sea Raider.
- 441 The Ocean Firefly; or, A Middy's Vengeance.
- 446 Haphazard Harry; or, The Scapegrace of the Sea.
- 450 Wizard Will; or, The Boy Ferret of New York.
- 454 Wizard Will's Street Scouts.
- 462 The Born Guide; or, The Sailor Boy Wanderer.
- 468 Neptune Ned, the Boy Concoaster.
- 474 Flora; or, Wizard Will's Vagabond Pard.
- 483 Ferrets Afloat; or, Wizard Will's Last Case.
- 487 Nevada Ned, the Revolver Ranger.
- 495 Arizona Joe, the Boy Pard of Texas Jack.
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- 511 The Outlawed Middy.
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- 656 Butterfly Billy's Man Hunt.
- 662 Butterfly Billy's Bonanza.
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